

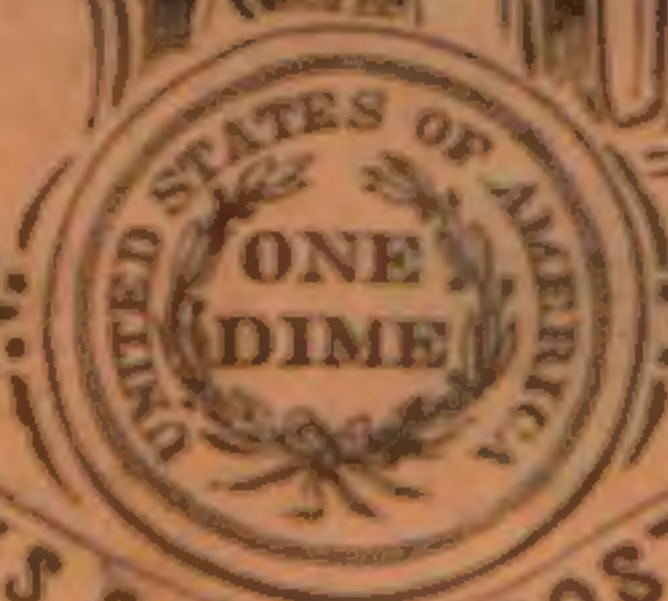
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THE

MYSTIC CANOE.

A ROMANCE OF ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

BY EDWARD S. ELLIS,

AUTHOR OF "SETH JONES," "FRONTIER ANGEL," "BILL BIDDON," ETC.

NEW YORK:

BEADLE AND COMPANY, PUBLISHERS

118 WILLIAM STREET.

THE MYSTIC CANOE.

CHAPTER I.

LOVE-STRUCK.

Nurslings of nature, I mark your bold bearing,
Pride in each aspect, and strength in each form,
Hearts of warm impulse, and souls of high daring,
Born in the battle, and reared in the storm.
The red levin flash, and the thunder's dread rattle,
The rock-riven wave, and the war-trumpet's breath,
The din of the tempest, the yell of the battle,
Nerve your steeled bosoms to danger and death.—J. R. DRAKE.

THE blood-red sun had passed the meridian, and was sinking in the unruffled bosom of Lake Erie, on an autumn day, a hundred years ago, when a single canoe containing a single person, habited in the garb of a hunter, shot out from one of the numerous inlets of the northern shore, and took an easterly course. A glance at the occupant would have shown that he was one of those personages so well known on the frontier at that time, and who are now scarcely met with except in the pages of history. An embrowned face, covered with a scraggy beard, an iron frame, and indurated muscles—a keen, unwavering eye, and a command of his physical resources—such were the characteristics of the hunter who plied the canoe with such skill. Perhaps my reader has met with him before. His name was Basil Veghte.*

The interval between the exploits already recorded, and those which we now are about to narrate, was too brief to make the least perceptible difference in his appearance or manner. In the prime of life, five years are what five months are in childhood or old age, and it would have been difficult to have observed an additional gray hair around the temples of the hunter. It can not be denied that there were more

* See the Rival Scouts.

there, and that a wrinkle or two had appeared around the eyes—but they had not been made by *care*.

There was a delicious stillness in the air; and, as the slight Indian canoe glided over the glassy surface, it scarcely made a ripple. Although but a few rods from shore, yet the water was many fathoms deep, and far down beneath, the pebbles could be seen glistening upon the bottom, and the huge fish occasionally passing to and fro. Along the bank, for miles in each direction, the forest stretched. The hand of the pioneer had not yet been laid upon its columns. To the left, lay Lake Erie—one of those vast inland seas that are the wonder of the world. Its surface, so rarely placid, lay now, under that summer sun, perfectly quiescent. There was a languor in the air that suggested to any mind that the lake, as well as all the surrounding objects of nature, was asleep. This simile was heightened by the appearance of a small group of islands, several miles from shore, that lay low down in the water.

It was in the direction of these isles that the hunter's eyes were fixed, as he dallied with his paddle, and slowly glided along the shore. Never once were they turned toward the wood on his right. He seemed to have no fear of the treacherous crack of a rifle from its depths. The red Indian could have picked him off to a dead certainty, but such a contingency seemed not to enter the hunter's mind. As has been already said, the islands were the object of his attention.

He had glided perhaps a hundred rods, in his quiet manner, his eyes never refraining from looking out upon the lake, when he held his paddle motionless, and his canoe gradually came to rest. As it did so, he arose to the standing position, and shading his eyes from the glare of the sun, gazed long and searchingly out upon the lake.

"It's time it was there," he muttered. "It was earlier 'n this that I seen it yesterday, and it hardly ever misses the time; but, I'll be shot, if I can see any thing of it now."

He looked to the south, and then to the north of the islands, but the object that he was seeking still remained invisible. Finally, he sunk down in his canoe.

"Can't be I'm too late, and yet it might be too. It's about two hours past the time of noon; and, let me see, it was a little 'arlier that the thing appeared yesterday. Beats all

creation!" he added, after a moment's reflection. "I think there must be a *sperit* in it! It may be that it is further out on the lake, and it ain't nigh enough to be seen. I'll try this thing I got from Ensign Christie, at Presq' Isle, and see whether it will help me or not."

Once more he rose in his canoe, and produced a small telescope, which, adjusting to his eye, he turned toward the islands already referred to. For several minutes he swept the horizon, but was again disappointed in encountering the object of his search.

"Queer," he muttered, as he once more sunk down in his canoe. "It maybe about there, and yet I've missed seeing it. There ain't many that's got a better pair of eyes than mine, and it seems with the help of this contrivance, I could see a bug crawling around among them islands, but I can't see it."

He relapsed into a reverie, the termination of which was the paddling of his canoe in to land. Stepping upon the shore, he pulled the frail vessel after him, and then strode toward a tall tree. It required but a few moments for him to ascend this. To the very topmost branches he went, where, producing his telescope, he once more devoted himself to searching the lake for the object that was the cause of his voyage thither.

Patience is a characteristic of the border man. His years of encounter with the treacherous red-man gives him an amount almost equal to that acquired by the Esquimaux, who will sit for a dozen hours without motion beside the hole from which he expects the coveted seal to rise. Long and patiently did Basil Veghte gaze out upon the surface of Lake Erie. Slowly he swept the glass from north to south, and finally settled it upon a point just below the southernmost island.

"It don't seem any use in looking," he soliloquized. "I don't think a wild duck could have 'scaped my sight, but I see nothin'—hello!"

Just rounding the point of the island toward which he was gazing, he descried a black speck that an ordinary eye would have pronounced a water-fowl; but the hunter was not deceived for an instant.

"*It's the canoe!*" he added, with an excitement rather startling in a man of his tried nerves.

The object, then, which he had been seeking was a canoe, or rather the person who guided it. It was now before him, and eagerly did he scan it and its occupant. And yet it was not visible for more than a minute. Under the control of an experienced hand it was gliding swiftly, and almost immediately disappeared behind the island which had been scrutinized so long.

Basil Veghte remained in his perch, scanning every portion of the islands with the telescope, in the hope that he might gain another glimpse of the mystic canoe and its occupant; but, although he continued his ocular search for fully three-quarters of an hour, yet nothing further was discovered, and with a deep sigh he replaced his telescope, and descended to the ground. Here, before entering his own vessel, he folded his arms and leaned against the tree in a deep reverie.

"Women is queer things; that's Mariano in that canoe, and what business have I to be watchin' her as if I was a spy? What brings her to them islands? That's the question that's bothered me all summer, and I've never been able to answer it."

For a few moments more he maintained silence, but, as was his custom, when musing, it was not long before he again began his self-conversation.

"Somehow or other I believe that Johnson is mixed up in this matter. Something tells me so; I seem to feel it in my bones, and when that's the case, I'm never mistook. That night that I met him in the woods in the snow-storm, I felt for a half-hour that he was coming, and sure enough he came, when it seemed a wild bear couldn't have stood the storm."

"Women is queer things," he again resumed. "It's a pity that Johnson wasn't killed when Fort Presq' Isle fell—then I wouldn't be bothered in this manner. If I didn't know he was trying to hunt down that gal, I could go on and scout and not think nothin' more about it."

But the hunter had not as yet learned enough of his own nature to understand that such could not be. The suspicion regarding Johnson may have been a powerful auxiliary cause, but the true reason for his persistent watching for the mystic canoe, was his absorbing interest in its occupant.

Many months before, he had stood on the northern shore

of Lake Erie, in deep reverie, when Mariano, this Indian girl, had landed upon the beach, and stood before him. There he mustered sufficient courage to do the bravest deed of his life—he had asked her to share her life with him. As if terror-struck, the girl gave an impulsive denial, and almost instantly embarked in her canoe.

The hunter was left standing upon the shingle, still absorbed in reverie, until she disappeared over the lake, when he turned and entered the wood. Had her refusal been a deliberate and decided one, Basil Veichte would resolutely have kept down his eluding aspirations, and flung away forever the fond hope that he still cherished. But, the manner in which she had declined his impassioned offer, raised a doubt as to its genuineness. With no reason which he could ever give to himself, he attributed the cause to Horace Johnson—that evil genius which had followed him for so long a time, and, by the girl's own confession, had followed her like a shadow, greatly to her own unhappiness.

He longed to encounter the girl once more—to hear in an unexcited manner the irrevocable words fall from her lips. Not until then could he bring himself to the point of dismissing the dream that seemed scarcely to forsake him for an hour, whether waking or sleeping. For the space of six months, or so, he hunted much in the manner that an automaton would have done. Finally, in the spring of the year, his footsteps again led him along the northern shore of the lake. Here he searched out the village which was the home of the Indian girl, Mariano. On several occasions he gained a glimpse of her, but never did he allow himself to be discovered. He then observed something regarding the creature which was certainly singular and unexplainable to him. Every day, at near the middle of the forenoon, she started from beneath the wooded bank, a mile or two below the village, and, in a small canoe, made her way to a group of islands, just visible in the distance. This proceeding gave the hunter considerable uneasiness, and confirmed him in his belief that women most emphatically were "queer things."

After watching her departure in this manner for several mornings, he finally attempted to follow her from the land. But the little vessel was guided too dextrously, and was not

long in leaving him behind. With many doubts regarding the propriety of his course, he approached her starting-point one night, in his own canoe, and, remaining concealed until she had gone a good distance, he cautiously followed. It required no little skill to prevent his being discovered; but with his telescope he could keep her under observation, when she must lose all sight of him, even were her keen black eyes on the look-out for some pursuer, as it seemed to the hunter **that she really was.**

It never once entered Basil Veghte's head that, perhaps, he had a pursuer. It would have been well had he occasionally glanced behind him!

Finally, he saw her turn her canoe toward the cluster of islands referred to. Between these were tortuous channels, in which a fugitive might bewilder the most persistent foe. She had scarcely entered these waters when she was lost to view.

Why did not Basil Veghte follow? He dare not. His own innate sense of right forbade. It appeared as if these islands were sacred to the beautiful maiden, and he would have felt as though he were invading and desecrating holy ground to venture there.

Running his canoe under the bank, he took his station, and, with telescope in hand, awaited her appearance. But, although he stood there until the sun set, and darkness closed around him, he saw nothing more regarding her. The night happened to be moonlight, and, embarking in his boat, he paddled out on the lake, until the islands once more came to view, when he watched several hours for her. But it availed nothing, and he at last returned to the shore, and lay down for a few hours' slumber.

On the morrow, at very nearly the time as on the previous day, she made her appearance and disappearance in precisely the manner already recorded. The hunter watched for her, and failed again, as he believed he should do when he took his station.

Day after day, until months had elapsed, and the summer was far advanced, did the same thing occur. Veghte had come to look upon the whole proceeding as partaking largely of the supernatural. Mariano was something above human, and was "to be treated accordingly."

And, as the darkness gathered around him, what vision was it that came unbidden? The canoe that had haunted him for so many months.

"And how is this going to end?" he asked himself, after a pause. "I'm getting well on in years, and I've had white hairs in my head for a long time. I s'pose I shall hunt, hunt, tramp, tramp, till some day a red-skin wings me, or I go to sleep and never wake up again.

"Yes, I must wake up again—but *where*? In the other world that I've thought about, dreamed about, and remember hearing my mother talk about, when I stood at her knee? I wonder whether I shall meet her, and the little sister that they put in the ground, a great many long years ago? Something tells me I shall—but it is wonderful—wonderful!"

Many a sleepless night and unquiet day had he endured since encountering Mariano, on that awful December night. The forest life, although very dear and fascinating, lost part of its charms, from its contrast with *what might be*!

Home! with its charms and sacred joys—a place where to lay his head; a gentle form, with the love-light beaming in her eyes, waiting to welcome his return; the sweet word, "Father," uttered by infantile lips; the days of wandering ended, and rest, peace, repose!

Ay, the same, same dream that had followed him, day and night; in storm and sunshine; in the solemn depths of the great woods; in the thrilling moment of conflict; during the exciting hunt, and the lonely hours of solitude—a dream that had now grown to be an inseparable part of his very nature.

Not until the moon had sunk low in the heavens, and dense darkness shrouded wood and lake, did the hunter change his position. Then, as if waking to consciousness, he slung his rifle over his shoulder, and strode away into the forest, taking a direction that led along the lake-shore, for perhaps a hundred rods or so, when he turned abruptly to the left, and, going about the same distance into the wood, he halted before a dense mass of shrubbery and undergrowth. Had there been sufficient light, this mass would have been found to consist principally of solid rocks, with huge boulders, outlying like sentinels. The interior of this resort was hollow, and, in short, had been the home of Basil Veighte for many months.

Taking a stooping position, he immediately entered his semi-subterranean house, and, throwing himself upon a mass of limbs, prepared to sleep. All was utter darkness around him, yet he needed no light. It would have been impossible, under the circumstances, not to understand every inch of the apartment.

The hunter was relapsing into unconsciousness, when he suddenly became aware that there was some one else present besides himself. He distinctly heard him breathing but a few feet distant. It would be difficult to describe the sensations of the man at this discovery. The most prominent one certainly was *surprise* that such a state of things should exist; and the next emotion was the instinctive one of self-preservation.

The deep, regular breathing of the intruder proved that he was sleeping—so profoundly sleeping, in fact, that he had not been disturbed by the entrance of Veghte. This naturally raised a doubt as to whether he was a white man or not. He could hardly be a North American Indian and slumber so heavily.

While Veghte was turning these questions over in his mind, the sleeper gave a yawn—so Caucasian, in fact, as to settle at once the identity of his race. He was no red-man—that was certain.

Being a white man, he could scarcely be an enemy; and yet, it was by no means certain that he was a friend. If the former, he would have scarcely "buried the dead in his den" in this manner. Veghte decided that he had entered it without suspecting it was inhabited and was still unaware that any one else laid claim to its possession.

The hunter remained perfectly still, desiring to avoid developments. The man seemed to turn and mutter something unintelligible, and then composed himself for further sleep. Veghte was hardly willing that this should continue, until he had learned something more regarding his visitor. Accordingly he called out:

"I say, you, there!"

There was "sensational" beyond question, but no reply.

"I say, you, there; what might you be doing in these parts?"

The answer came, in a deep, rich voice :

"I was seeking slumber, my friend."

"Rather a queer way to enter a man's house."

"I did not know that it belonged to any one. If I have given offense, I will go out in the open air, and sleep there."

"No you won't either ; you stay here."

"If I am welcome, I do ; otherwise, I should prefer not to disturb you."

"There was no disturbance about it, though I own it did kind of startle me when I heard you breathin' like."

"And I was much disturbed to find I had invaded another man's dominion. Who might I be addressing ?"

"Basil Veghte is my name."

"Ah!—the same that was at Presq' Isle when it fell ?"

"The same, precisely. How did you know of that ?"

"I have heard of you often. Mr. Johnson—Horace Johnson—has mentioned your name in my presence."

"Ah—is that so ? What did he say ?"

"I can not be a tale-bearer," replied the man, without the slightest bitterness in his tone.

"I didn't expect you to be," was the somewhat sullen rejoinder. "I wouldn't care what any one else said ; but that man—I don't like him, and I should like to hear what he thinks about me."

"His words can do thee no harm, so it will be wise to think no more about them."

"He has no reason to like me—"

"Has he reason to dislike thee ?"

"Wal, I can't exactly say about that ; but I am pretty sure he doesn't admire me much. But," suddenly exclaimed the hunter, "who are you ?"

"I am known as Father Jenois."

"A priest among the Indians ?"

"The same."

"I've heard of you, often, and can say I am glad to see you—which isn't exactly true, as I can't set eyes on you at all, just now, in the darkness."

The priest laughed at this rough attempt at witticism, and the best of feeling was now established between the two men. Father Jenois was one of those good men who, a hundred

years since, devoted his life to the amelioration and spiritual improvement of the Indians. For many years he had labored along both shores of Lake Erie, traveling over an area of thousands of miles, and scarcely enjoying a day's rest. This, in time, gave him an acquaintance, perhaps, more extensive than that of any living man. He had stood beside the dying warrior; he had administered unto the sick, and abounded in good works at all times. No hand was ever raised against Father Jonois. He was never known to carry a weapon with him. How he obtained his food, when traveling over the long stretches intervening between the forts and villages, could scarcely be told; but he had been heard to remark that he never wanted—the same One who fed the sparrows would not permit him to suffer. Through the French and Indian War, he did not cease his labors, encountering alike each hostile force with equal impunity. He was now near sixty years of age, but his frame was erect, and his footstep firm as ever. His silvery hair fell low upon his shoulders, giving him a very patriarchal appearance, somewhat increased by a staff which he carried in his hand. His dress was scrupulously neat, and always of the clerical black, worn in the fashion of France at the time he left forty years before. He would not conform to the customs of those among whom he labored, except in the wearing of moccasins. Otherwise, he might have been transported to a civilized community at any moment, and still felt that he was in his proper place.

"How was it you come to enter this place?" inquired the hunter. "I thought no one else knowed any thing about it."

"How was it that you discovered it?"

"Why I stumbled on to it without making any search."

"And thus did I. I saw nothing of it until I directly confronted it."

"Even then it would take a woodman to find out what it was."

"And have I not wandered in the woods long enough to be called a woodman?"

"I s'pose you have, but didn't you notice any signs about, showing that some one else had been there before you?"

"It was growing dark when I entered, but I remember the thought crossed my mind that it was most likely claimed by some one else."

"And you come on, and went to snoozing, just the same as ever; never once thinkin' but what there might be red-skins or enemies inside."

"I have no enemies, Basil."

This quiet remark somewhat stunned the woodman, who was hardly prepared for it.

"Shoot me, if I believe you have any enemies, and I don't think there is another man in the Canadas or colonies who can say the same."

"There are plenty. Did we all live up to the divine injunction, of loving our neighbor as ourself, there would be none of this dreadful enmity that drenches our land in blood."

Basil Veghte was receiving instruction such as he had never heard before. The idea of perfect brotherhood among men was one that had rarely if ever entered his mind. His life had not been such as to foster the belief if he had ever entertained it.

"That may be so; but, how about Injins?"

"Why do you ask that question? If they have a different colored skin from us, should it debar them from any of the rights that we claim? Have they not souls?"

"I didn't know it. I've always looked upon them as a set of wild animals that hadn't any business any way in living in America."

"What a sad idea, but the same that thousands have entertained who should know far more than you! They are poor, ignorant heathens it is true, and that makes our duty to them *all the greater*."

"Wal, I can say I never shot a red-skin that I didn't have to, to save my own top-knot. When they burnt Presq' Isle over our heads, my rifle did good service, as it had done afore, and is likely to do again. I don't like Injins—that's a fact."

"Do you dislike them all?"

"Can't help it. I was born so."

"Not all, I am thinking," remarked the priest, with a peculiar intonation that surprised the hunter.

"Why do you say that?"

"Do you dislike all the females that belong to their tribe?"

Ah! Basil Veghte now understood his meaning. He was

referring to the beautiful Mariano, the heroine of the Mystic Canoe. But, how came he to know any thing about it? Who besides themselves (excepting Horace Johnson perhaps) knew the secret?" The simple-hearted man was at a loss for a reply, until his kind-hearted visitor came to his relief.

"I have known Mariano through all her life. I assisted at her birth and baptized her when an infant. That Ottawa, Bulkblak, who claimed to be her father, and who she believed was such, was no relative of hers. There is none of her blood living."

"Who is she?" inquired the hunter, betraying the most absorbing interest in his manner.

"Her father was a brave, handsome half-breed, who went on a war-expedition just before her birth, and never returned. Her mother was partly white, who died in giving her birth. The Ottawa took her in his lodge and adopted her, and she always believed him to be her father. They were such antipodes that one who knew nothing of them, might well doubt their relationship."

"Women is queer things."

"She seemed ever to entertain a friendly feeling toward the whites, even when the strife was waged with the greatest fury. There are many things that she did during the war, which, if I chose to reveal, would insure her destruction at once, by those who are now her most cherished friends."

"Tell me some of them," impulsively exclaimed the hunter.

"I can never make them known."

"But you needn't fear any thing from me."

"I suppose not; I know that you entertain the best of feelings toward her; but it would not be prudent to reveal them even to you."

The tone in which this remark was made could not give any offense, but it seemed to go through and through the simple-hearted hunter. Father Joseph many years later among the Indians had given him a pattern of the white people, which was kind and pleasing even to the rude hunter. One felt a sort of reverence in conversing with him, and received the most unwelcome truths as a child would receive an admonition from a father. Basil Vaughan,

conscious that beyond question the priest knew more than any one living regarding the being that absorbed all his thoughts, could but feel the deepest interest in the man, and all that he uttered. It seemed to him that he would have given any thing, could he but clear up the mystery that hung over the girl's life; yet his earnest questions had been quietly cast back, and he was at a loss what further to say.

"You have long felt an interest in Mariano," remarked the priest.

"How do you know I have?"

Father Jenois indulged in a quiet laugh.

"I did not seek to know it; it came to me in such a way that I could not avoid observing it."

"Yes," sighed the weary Veghte. "Women is queer things—I can't get her out of my thoughts. I don't know what is going to come of me. I ain't good for nothin' any more."

"All very natural, when a young man is in love. I've seen the same thing, hundreds of times before. But it will come right in the end. Now, Basil Veghte," continued the priest, in a solemn tone, "I have long wished this opportunity to speak with you. I have some serious questions to ask. In the first place, do you really love this girl, Mariano?"

"I don't know much about love, as it never troubled me till I met her. But, if it is love to think of nothin' but her, to dream about her, to see her walking in the woods all times of day, and to hear her voice, when I don't expect any noise at all—if that is love, then I guess I've got it."

"There is no doubt about that matter." This remark, made in a light manner, was followed by a few minutes' silence, when Father Jenois spoke.

"You are not certain how she feels toward you—there lies the difficulty. Is not that the difficulty?"

"I'm afraid it's exactly so."

"Have you ever spoken with her about it? Come, do not be afraid to trust me—I may be able to afford you some assistance."

"Yes—I have said a few words."

"Give me the particulars."

Basil Veghte then again related what took place at his memorable interview with Mariano upon the shore of Lake

Eric. The priest listened attentively, and when he had finished, asked:

"How long ago was this?"

"The best part of two years."

"Ah!—" A whole volume was comprehended in that exclamation. It told unmistakably that the occasion which had brought it forth, was the clearing up of a mystery that was resting upon the mind of Father Jonois. It said, in sooth, "Every thing is explained; I understand." The priest now hummed for a few moments a monotonous chant, as if he were mentally turning over some subject.

"My friend, you can not tell how Mariano feels toward you. She refused you two years ago, but since then she has had abundant opportunity *to change her mind*."

The woodman started. His first exclamation was characteristic. "Women is queer things; I never thought of such a thing."

"Remember, I do not say that she has; I only remark that such a thing is possible. I see that you know very little of any thing of woman kind."

"That's true; I was never troubled by them, till this one come across my path."

"Basil," said the priest, in his kind, fatherly manner, "you are in a situation where you need advice. Perhaps there is no one better qualified to give it than myself. I have but a few words to say to you."

"I'm ready to hear them."

"You have spent all your life in the woods. Your habits of hunting and solitude have grown to be necessary to your existence—"

"They was once, but I don't think they are now."

"Should you ever unite yourself to Mariano, it would be your duty to give over your manner of living—to become quiet and settled, and to make a good husband and father."

"I know that."

"Can you do it?"

"I can do *any thing*!" said the woodman, with the strongest feeling. "There ain't nothin' that I wouldn't do for the sake of getting her. I shall go under, Father Jonois, if she is lost. It's only the hope of gettin' her *some time* that keeps me alive."

"You are mistaken, Basil; there was no man yet that has been killed by love. All survive it."

"I know *I* shouldn't."

"You know no such thing. Receive the words of a man who knows far more than you about this matter. You say you could change your way of life. Do you ever feel different? Do you not doubt sometimes whether you could remain a quiet settler for the remainder of your days?"

"I did at first; but, for more than a year I haven't. I really want rest and a home, like other men."

"If this feeling is steady, never changing—and I must believe it to be so after what you have said—then, Basil Veghte, I unhesitatingly advise you to seek out Mariano, and make her your wife."

"But, Father Jonois, will she have me?"

"I can't say with certainty—but I can *give you encouragement*. There are some things about this girl that I would like to tell you; it would change your feelings considerably; but, the time has not come. I hope soon to see you again, when you will learn more."

"Will you see Mariano very soon?"

"I expect to meet her to-morrow."

"Will you—that is—will you—"

"Leave all to me, Basil. I will befriend you. You are certainly willing to trust me. It is now late; I am weary."

No more was said that evening; but Basil Veghte lay awake a long time reflecting upon the words of good Father Jonois.

CHAPTER II.

THE BIG CANOE AND THE BIG CALL.

He passed in the heart of that silent wood—

Nor paused, till the rock where a vaulted bed
Had been hewn of old for the kindly dead
Arose on his midnight way.—HEMANS.

When the first rays of the morning light pierced the lodge of the hunter, Father Jonois arose, and going through his

morning devotions, bade farewell, for the present, to his kind-hearted host. The latter expressed regret at his departure.

"I expect soon to meet you again, when it is probable I shall have something to tell you—something that will deeply interest you."

"You've got it now, I make no doubt, if you was only a mind to tell a feller."

Father Jonois smiled, and, taking his hand, walked rapidly away, in a western direction, soon disappearing in the woods. The hunter stood leaning on his rifle, and watching the point where he was lost from view for some time. Finally he came to the upright position, with a great sigh.

"Women is queer things, and so is priests—specially the one that has just gone away. Wouldn't I like to hear what he has got to tell me that is so interesting? Wal, he says he will tell it soon, and I hope he will."

It was yet very early in the morning, and, as Veghte did not wish his morning meal for several hours, he strolled down to the lake-shore, and occupied himself in gazing out upon the surface. Naturally, at first, his eye took the direction of the islands; but, as he saw nothing unusual at this point, his glance wandered over the rest of the lake.

"Shoot me!"

The exclamation was a sort of gasp, accompanied by an involuntary recoil, showing how unmistakable was the amazement of the hunter. And well might he be surprised; for, out upon Lake Erie, he beheld a most unusual sight. Several miles distant, were visible the white sails of some vessel, momentarily growing larger and larger, proving that it was approaching nearer him. It was but a short distance from shore, and pursuing a course parallel with it.

Veghte instantly produced his telescope, and adjusted it to his eye. The sight that rewarded this was astonishing and gratifying. The sheet of water that is now covered with all kinds of craft, whose every portion is dotted by the "white sails of commerce," was, a century since, almost entirely devoid of any boats, except the frail canoes of the hunters and Indians. Now and then, at rare intervals, some small vessel had entered the chain of great lakes, and conferred the rare

men along their border, almost as much as did the vessels of Columbus.

"That's a whopping canoe!" was Veghte's first exclamation, after taking a fair view of it through his instrument. "I've heard of 'em before, but I've never see'd many of 'em. I can't see why they don't have more of 'em on these lakes. There's plenty of water to float 'em, I'm sure. Hello!"

As he spoke, a puff of white smoke issued from the side of the vessel, and a moment later the dull boom of a cannon went surging along the shore of the lake, echoing and reverberating in a style that was absolutely awe-inspiring to the listening hunter. There was quite a swell in the lake, and the hull of the vessel was visible, as she came upon the crest, her bow sometimes rising clear from the water; and yet, she glided straight onward, in a manner that would have elicited admiration, even at this late day. As for Veghte, he was almost speechless from very delight. At length he found utterance for his thoughts:

"There goes another gun! I s'pose the first time might have been an accident; but, when done twice, there's something meant. I remember Ensign Christie used the gun at Presq' Isle, in the evening, as a signal that all was well. At other times, it meant that all wasn't well. Therefore, I s'pose the firing of that gun means something. It can't mean that any thing is the matter," resumed the hunter, lowering his telescope, after a moment's silence, "for things look too sleek and nice on board that canoe, or whatever they may call it."

The sloop (for that was the character of the vessel) came bowling along, discharging its bow gun at intervals, which proceeding was unquestionably meant as a signal for some one upon shore. The telescope of the hunter revealed the forms of several persons upon the deck, all seemingly occupied in watching the margin of the lake. At this point, most of the sail was taken in, and the speed of the vessel was greatly diminished. This was another source of wonder and delight to Veghte.

"That's an easy way to save a man from working," he exclaimed. "No twisting of paddles there. Just up with the sail, and off she goes: and down with the sails, and she

stops. Strikes me it might be a good thing to fix up one of our canoes, if the wind wasn't more likely to upset the whole thing than to carry it forward."

The sloop was now barely moving through the water—just sufficiently, in fact, to obey her rudder, which still kept her parallel with the shore. Verhte fell to speculating as to who could be the object of their search; for, beyond question, they were looking and expecting to see some one. The first name that naturally presented itself to him was that of Father Jonois. Nor was he mistaken; for, as he cast his eyes down the margin of the lake, he saw the priest appear up on a point where he was conspicuous, and then raise his hat and make some signal. It was almost instantly seen on board the sloop, which immediately directed its course toward him. As it passed by the hunter, he instinctively struck back from view, and scrutinized it with greedy eyes. The dark, low hull; the mast and yards; the bowsprit and curved prow; the man at the wheel, and those standing around him; the sails, covers and rigging—all these made a picture that was stamped upon the mind of Basil Verhte to his dying day.

Whoever composed the officers and crew of the sloop, it was manifest they understood seamanship, for they maneuvered the boat in a manner that could not be excelled. They were rounded, and came to anchor only a few rods from shore, directly opposite where the priest was standing. A small boat, resembling a canoe, was then lowered, and pulled by two men to his very feet. Before entering, he conversed with them a few minutes, as if not perfectly satisfied with the appearance of things. Finally, however, he stepped in, was taken on board the sloop, which immediately hoisted sail, and steered directly up the lake.

As motionless as the tree beside him, stood the hunter, his telescope to his eye, and intently watching the sail, until it was but a mere speck, and, at length, faded altogether from view in the distance.

"That was the strangest animal I ever set eyes on," he muttered, as he turned away in quest of his breakfast. "Habit the Injins opened their eyes to see it come along the lake? But I guess they didn't gaze more than I did. Well, I was up, I was astonished I partly like. Their taking away Father

Jonois looks mighty queer; but then, everybody seems to know him, and I s'pose it's all right."

Game was too abundant to make a tedious search necessary to secure his morning meal. He had gone but a very short distance when he brought down a wild turkey of great size, and swelled with fat almost to bursting. This was soon spit-roasted over a fire, and cooking in a style that could have been little improved by any modern professor of the culinary art.

And then the choicest portions—the juicy, tender meat—the rich, oily fat—these were devoured with an appetite and gusto that knew no dread of indigestion. The hunter had filled himself with enough to last him apparently a week, and was rubbing his greasy fingers through his hair, when he was startled into a vigorous exclamation by hearing once more the boom of the cannon that had surprised him so greatly a few hours before.

Sitting perfectly quiet, until a second report came rolling heavily over the water, he sprung to his feet, and made all haste to the lake. Here he saw, scarce a half mile away, the identical sloop that had not departed from his imagination for the last hour. She was heading straight in toward shore, and the inexperienced woodman felt a momentary fear that she was going to run upon the sand. He even glanced around him to make sure that he had a safe line of retreat in case of such disaster.

When yet a goodly distance from shore, however, the sloop rounded to, gracefully, and again discharged her bow gun. Shortly after, she took in sail, and continued approaching, in a coy and cautious manner, as if fearful of the danger that lurked there.

All this time, Basil Verlte was crouched behind the trunk of a tree. He had no need of using his telescope, for every movement upon the deck of the sloop was plainly visible. He saw Father Jonois standing near the stern, so close that he could detect a nervous, flickering motion of the eyes, peculiar to him. The meaning of all this manœuvring was a mystery to the hunter. He could not understand what could bring this strange craft upon this portion of Lake Erie. Why had Father Jonois been taken on board? Was not the whole thing a French contrivance to injure the English?

Such and similar were the questions that Veghte proposed to himself as he stood and scrutinized every movement of the sloop and its crew. It never once entered his head that he might be the identical person for whom they were seeking. Had he known that such was the case, the probabilities are that he would have given them all a much wider berth.

Our hero was surveying the vessel in that eager, absorbed manner that allows no object to escape its scrutiny, when his gaze was arrested by the sight of an elderly man dressed in the uniform of an officer. Rather curiously, he did not observe him, until he saw him pacing across the deck with his arms folded behind him, and his head bent as if in deep reverie. Whether he had just emerged from the cabin, or whether he had been on deck from the beginning, it was impossible to say; but if the latter were the case, it was difficult to understand how he had escaped observation so long.

There was something in the appearance of this man that arrested and held the attention of the woodman. He had seen and been associated with British officers often from his peculiar employment, upon the most intimate terms; but he had never encountered one who impressed him so strongly as did the soldier in question. What his precise rank was, it was impossible to tell, as he wore no insignia whereby it could be determined; but Veghte set him down as an officer very high in the service.

Whoever the man might be, it was evident to whomever saw him, that he was every inch a soldier. His carriage, his manner, his appearance—every thing bespoke the stern warrior, and the hero of many an eventful fight. He was very thin, almost to emaciation, with an aquiline nose, red face, and hair of silvery whiteness. Straight as an arrow, with a step that was as firm and self-confident as the tread of a lion, a keen gray eye that glittered with a metallic brightness, and that never quailed, but looked you unwaveringly in the face, such were the noticeable points of the officer that paced the deck of the sloop "SERRINE."

The speed of the vessel gradually slackened, until, as she rounded to, and an anchor was dropped, she became perfectly quiescent. Then Veghte noticed that they were making preparations for discharging the gun once more. By accident,

its muzzle was turned directly toward the spot where he stood. This occasioned considerable perturbation upon his part.

"Shoot me!" he muttered, "if I don't believe they're going to shoot me! That thing carries a big ball, and I ain't sure whether it will go through this tree or not if it should hit it. If I started to run, it might overtake me, afore I go much further. Howsumever, I guess I'll take it."

He shut his eyes, as the piece was discharged, confidently expecting a crashing broadside that might almost annihilate him. It is needless to say, that the blank cartridge did not so much even as raise a breeze in his immediate neighborhood. The hunter even smiled at his own timidity, in attempting to avoid what, a moment's reflection convinced him, was entirely harmless.

With the flash of the gun, came an equally sudden illumination of Basil Veghte's mind. Did not every thing indicate at least that he was the man for whom they were searching? What other reasonable explanation could be offered of their conduct? And what meant Father Jonois' earnest scrutiny of the woods, if it was not an effort to discover himself?

If any doubts remained in the mind of the hunter, they were set at rest by the priest, who, in a clear, resounding voice, shouted the name of Basil Veghte. The latter even then hesitated a moment; but, calling to mind the character of Father Jonois, he stepped forth and announced his presence.

The eyes of all the crew were immediately directed toward him, and two men in a canoe were instantly lowered, and approached the spot where he stood. He purposely refrained from entering until he could exchange a few words with them.

"Have you been lookin' for me?"

"Yes; that we have," was the reply, in broad Scotch accent.

"What do you want with me?"

"Lorry! we don't want nothin'; it's the General that sent us looking for you."

"And what General might he be?"

"General Montvere is the name he goes by, but whether that is his real name or not, we can't say," was replied in a

half-whisper and a furtive glance toward the sloop, as if fearful of the vengeance of the officer, with whose name they were taking such liberties.

"What does he want with me?"

"Lorry, you'll have to ax him; what does we know about it? He didn't tell us nothing about it."

"How did you know where to look for me?"

"Father Jonois told us."

"And how did you know where to look for him?"

"We didn't; we had to hunt. Didn't you hear us firing our gun? 'Pears to me you're axing me a lot of questions."

"I'll ax as many as I darne! please," replied Veghte, who had grown to hold quite an exalted idea of his own importance. "And if you ain't a mind to answer me, why, I'll stay on shore—that's all."

"S'posen we can't answer 'em."

"Then you needn't, that's all ag'in."

The men waited a few minutes longer, while our hero leisurely surveyed the sloop and its living freight, and the latter scrutinized him with considerable interest. Finally, he stepped deliberately in the canoe, and was paddled to the sloop, and received on board.

CHAPTER III.

VEGHTÉ AS GUIDE.

Let them come with the pipe; we will tread it to dust,
And our arrows of war shall ne'er moulder with rust;
Let them come with their hosts; to the desert we'll flee,
And the drought and the famine our helpers shall be.—PIKEB.

As Basil Veghte came upon the deck of the sloop, he was met by Father Jonois, who took him by the hand, and received him with great cordiality.

"You may think this strange, Basil, but we have use for you. It is you for whom we were searching."

"What do you want of me?"

"It is not I exactly, but General Montvere, who has just

gone into the cabin, that wishes to see you. Why did you delay so long in coming on board?"

"The fact was," said the hunter, lowering his voice, "I didn't like the look of things. If it hadn't been that I saw you, they wouldn't have got me at all."

"You need have no fears. The General is an honorable man, and will treat you as such. I will go with you into the cabin. Come along, and fear nothing."

"Oh! I ain't scared," muttered Veghte, as he followed the good father. Arriving in the cabin, which was a commodious apartment, considering the size of the sloop, they found the General seated at a table, engaged in writing. He did not look up as the two entered, and the latter quietly took their seats. At this moment, Veghte caught the rustle of garments in the other compartment, which was separated from the one they occupied by curtains only, and looked inquiringly to the priest for an explanation. The latter merely motioned for him to await his time with patience, and he would be satisfied.

Suddenly the General looked up.

"Is this the man, Father Jonois?"

"This is Basil Veghte, whom I ventured to recommend to you for the duty required."

"You were pleased, reverend father, to speak very highly of him. I am glad to meet you, Basil."

"All right," responded the woodman, with some embarrassment. "The same to you."

"I learn that you have quite a reputation as a scout. You did us good service during the war."

"You mean the English, I s'pose."

"Precisely," smiled the officer.

"Wal, I make no doubt I did do a leetle for them, but no more'n I'm willing to do ag'in."

"That sounds right; I am glad to hear you speak so. You were with Ensign Christie, I believe, when Presq' Isle was taken."

"Yes."

"Christie was a brave fellow. He served under me twenty years ago, when but a mere boy. I'm pleased to learn that some doubt that was thrown upon the propriety of his conduct has been cleared up. I am rejoiced to hear it, I say."

"All right."

"My friend," resumed General Montvere, speaking in a very pleasant manner, "I induced Father Jonais to help us to obtain your services, because I had great faith in your honesty and ability. The duty that I require is this. I am anxious to get to Montreal, which you know was captured a few years since by us. We can go a considerable distance up Grand river in our sloop. At the western extremity of Ontario, another vessel is waiting for me. I wish to engage you as guide over the land intervening between Grand river and that point."

"We can do that easy enough; I've been over the same ground afore."

"But, I have my daughter with me, and you see it is going to be a severe and trying task to her. Nothing but the most imperative necessity, from which there is no escape, would induce me to undertake it. *But it must be done!* I must be in Montreal just as soon as it is possible for me to get there, and she must go with me. Can I engage you as guide for the distance mentioned?"

Basil Veghte hesitated a few moments before replying. To tell the truth, he did not exactly fancy the proposition that had been made. It would necessitate a week's absence at least, during which he must necessarily hear and know nothing regarding Mariano. And in that interval, there was no telling what evil might befall her. The name of Horace Johnson presented itself, and he could not shake off a dread of him.

Still Basil Veghte's common sense told him that a tramp like this would do him good. It was now some time since he had been upon such service, and he really feared he would become useless if he remained idle much longer. In the woods, where the safety of others compelled him to keep his wits constantly about him, he could but have them sharpened.

"You hesitate," remarked General Montvere. "If unwilling, do not do it. We will put you ashore this minute, if such is your wish."

"Let me advise you to go," interposed Father Jonais, who was not pleased with this hesitation.

"I'll do it," said Veghte, impressively.

"I am glad to hear you say that," said the General, heartily. "It will never be a source of regret to you. You shall receive more gold than you ever looked upon before."

This offer of liberal compensation never sounded so pleasantly to the hunter as upon this occasion. *He might need it, as he had never yet needed it!* Reaching Ontario, and receiving his reward, he would instantly set out upon his return, search out Mariano—ah! what then? At any rate, the possession of the gold could be of no harm to him—and there was no conjecturing what benefit it might be.

"I wish you not as a guide only," remarked the officer, "but you know that the forest through which we must pass abounds with danger. It is a severe trial to me, to be compelled to take my daughter with me, but I have already told you there is no avoiding it. Your skill in the ways of the woods and the habits of the savages, will be of great value to us. It is for that, as much as any thing, that I wish to secure them."

"All right," Veghte found voice to reply.

"It is not a long tramp, is it?" remarked Father Jonois.

"'Tis for a woman; women, you know, is queer things."

"You will not find Miss Montvere very queer," replied the priest, in a sort of apologetic tone. "She is a young lady not much accustomed to the hardships of a forest life, and you therefore understand the greater need for skill in the guide that the General seeks."

"Just so; I see."

At this juncture, the curtains parted and Miss Montvere entered. Her father instantly introduced the woodman to her. Veghte gave a good-natured nod, and kept his seat, while the lady bowed very coldly without speaking.

Miss Montvere was a tall, dignified lady, with the same Roman nose, sharp, gray eyes, and aristocratic air that distinguished her father. She was handsome, but it was a queenly beauty, that knew its own value, and that sought no vulgar admiration.

She seated herself near her father, and the latter said:

"Miss Malcline, this is the man that I have engaged to conduct us to Ontario. He is recommended very highly by

Father Jonois, and I make no doubt we shall find his services invaluable."

Miss Montvere slightly inclined her head, as if to signify her willingness that such a result should be obtained, and the General added :

" You know it is going to be a journey not unattended with some danger. We should consider ourselves fortunate therefore in having secured so valuable a man as Mr. Veghte."

An almost imperceptible inclination might have been taken also as assent to this proposition. The words, " Mr. Veghte," struck so oddly upon the ear of the hunter, that he instantly observed :

" General, I s'pose it would be just as easy to leave off that handle of my name, when you spake, and it would be more 'greeable to my feelin's if you'd do so."

The two men in the cabin smiled, while Miss Montvere looked as if she did not comprehend what had been uttered.

" What appellation do you prefer—what name is your choice ?"

" *Veghte* is the one I've owned the longest, though I won't get mad if you call me Basil now and then."

" You shall be addressed in the future in that manner."

Miss Montvere, bowing to her audience, disappeared in the other compartment, without exchanging a word with her father. The latter added :

" I believe every thing is arranged, Veghte. We expect to reach our landing-place at an early hour to-morrow morning, I believe."

With this remark, the officer took up his pen, and Father Jonois, accepting the hint, arose and signified for the woodman to follow him on deck. The latter did so, and the two walked to the stern, where they might converse without disturbance.

" What do you think of the General ?" inquired the priest.

" Don't know hardly what to think. He seems clever enough ; and yet he ain't one of them kind of men you could punch under the ribs and joke with."

" Hardly ; I would not advise you to attempt such a proceeding with him."

" But that gal—there ! get out ! Did you ever see the like ?"

Father Jonois could not avoid smiling at the earnestness of his friend.

"What is there so peculiar about her?"

"If she won't show any man, that women is queer things, then I'll give up. I thought she couldn't talk at first. I think it must hurt her when she speaks."

"Why so?"

"Why she seems to hate to do it, so much. The old man has enough to say, if he is kind of stiff, and doesn't like to laugh; but she! there's no getting any thing out of her."

The woodman at this juncture indulged in a very hearty though silent laugh.

"I'm thinking," said he, by way of explanation, "that when we tramp the woods, she'll have a little of that polish rubbed off."

"I trust we shall not be molested," gravely returned the good father.

"We! Are you going with us?" asked the astonished woodman.

"I expect to keep you company for a hundred or more miles. There is a village on the northern shore of Ontario that I must visit."

"I'm glad to hear that, I can tell you. The more of us the better."

"General Montvere has been searching for me for several days, for the purpose of acting as guide to him and his daughter on their way to Montreal. He reached the town which I left yesterday, and when told that I had started for Ontario, he cruised along the shore, firing his gun, as a signal."

"There are plenty others who know the way to Montreal."

"Yes; but he is very particular as to who shall have the honor of conducting him and his daughter through the wilderness. You may depend upon it, that you will be bountifully rewarded."

"And didn't you wish to go as his guide?"

"I felt competent, but I thought my time could be more profitably spent. Then, too, I knew that you were much my superior in that respect, and that in the end he would be better satisfied with you; and so it happens that you are the man."

"Who is he, and what does he want to get to Montreal in such a hurry for?"

"He has very important business there. You know Montreal is a British post, and it is probably on military matters that he is called thither."

"Have you ever seen him before?"

"I saw him in Europe, forty years ago. He was then a lieutenant. He stands very high in the favor of the British Government, and of course he thinks a great deal of his honor. No danger would hinder him from attempting to reach Montreal, if the crown called him thither."

"But how in the name of common sense did he come to have that gal with him?"

"I don't precisely understand how that came about. The General has never told me. You mustn't be too free, Basil, in questioning him. It has been his custom to command for years, and he may become impatient."

"All right; I won't 'sturb him. If he lets me alone, I won't bother him."

"He knows his place—but, Basil," added Father Jenois, changing his manner of address, "this is going to deprive you for some time of the privilege of seeing Mariano."

"I know; that's what made me hesitate. You said you expected to see her to-day."

"So I did; but of course I have no expectation of that at present."

"How could that be, when you started for Ontario this morning?"

"Because Mariano goes in the same direction, also."

Veghte's open mouth and staring eyes showed his amazement. The priest hastened to add:

"I must beg, Basil, that you refrain from questioning me for the present. The time, I trust, will soon come when I can explain every thing. So, abide in content until then."

The woodman was half tempted to become impatient at the manner of the good priest. He could not understand the necessity for this continual mystifying about Mariano. His thoughts being almost exclusively regarding her, he naturally felt the most absorbing sympathy in any thing relating to her movements. There was mystery hanging around her, it is

true, and this persistent refusal to clear it up was hard to bear. But it was Father Jonois who was torturing him; therefore it could avail nothing to call in question his procedure, or to manifest displeasure at it.

"Howsumever, Father Jonois—"

"Heigho! what's the matter now?" interrupted the priest, as some excitement became manifest among several men.

"They're looking at something over the lake," replied the woodman, gazing in the same direction. Calling to mind his telescope, he immediately produced it. A moment's glance of his keen eye satisfied him.

"What is it?" queried the priest.

"A canoe."

"How many are in it?"

"One," replied Veghte, endeavoring to suppress his feelings. The two men looked in each other's faces, and then the woodman, vainly trying to keep down his emotion, re-adjusted his instrument. A moment later, he drew a great sigh of relief.

"It ain't her; it's a man."

"I am glad of that. Is he going out on the lake?"

"He seems to want to cross our course. I think he has some idea of coming on board."

"I shouldn't think an Injin would do that," remarked one of the bystanders, approaching close to the two men.

"Maybe he isn't an Injin," returned Veghte. "S'pose he's a white man."

"I didn't know they used canoes."

"Humph! you don't know much, then. Didn't you come out after me in a canoe?"

"We had oars, though, and we'd had a boat of the reg'lar sort if we hadn't lost it the other night."

At this juncture, the occupant of the canoe was seen to rise, and make some signal. He doubtless wished to be taken on board; and, as there could be no plausible objection, sail was taken in that he might be given an opportunity.

The canoe kept directly in the path of the sloop, and the latter in a short time reached it. When a few hundred yards distant, Veghte uttered an exclamation, and turned to Father Jonois.

"Do you know who that man is?"

"I haven't noticed. Who is he?"

"*Horace Johnson.*"

The priest manifested as much surprise almost as the hunter.

"What has induced him to come out and board the sloop?"

"Oh, Heaven knows; I don't."

Shortly after, the individual in question came clambering upon deck.

"How are you, Father Jonois? How are you, Basil?"

"We meet under little different circumstances, eh?"

"What brings you here?" inquired Father Jonois, rather coldly.

"Wal, you see, I was on my way to Montreal, and guessing as how this boat was going in the same direction, I thought I might as well ride part the way as not!"

CHAPTER IV.

NIGHT ON THE INLAND SEA.

Some say that they could die on the salt, salt sea!

(But have they been loved on land?)

Some rave of the ocean in drunken glee—

Of the music born on a gusty morn,

When the tempest is waking and the billows are breaking,

And lightning flashing, and the thick rain dashing,

And the winds and the thunders shout forth the sea wonders.

Such things may give joy to a dreaming boy—

But for *me*—I will take my stand

On land, on land!

Forever and ever on solid land.—PROCTOR.

IGNORANCE and suspicion go hand in hand; and among all the uneducated classes, there are probably none who entertain more persistently a superstitious idea, when once settled in the mind, than those men who spend their lives in the American wilderness. The religion of the savage is made up of superstition, and that of his hardly-less savage white companion is much the same.

Basil Veghte was no exception to his class. Some of the crude belief that befogged his mind, if fairly brought to light,

would have appeared absurd in the highest degree. Thus, many of his thoughts regarding the Indian girl, Mariano, would not stand for a moment the test of reason.

Among other vagaries, he held a sort of half-suspicion that Horace Johnson was his evil genius—a man who was to annoy and cross him in every way imaginable. From the time he had encountered him in the woods, in that awful December storm, it seemed as if he were never to be entirely free from him. And now, when about to engage upon an expedition of peril, at the critical moment the man comes upon the scene. The hunter, as he afterward expressed it, “felt in his very bones,” that that man was to take a prominent part in that contemplated journey to Montreal.

Mixed with his superstition, was a moiety of reason. Whatever might be the destined part Horace Johnson was to act, it was certain he was no proof against a rifle bullet; and the woodman sometimes looked at the long, formidable rifle held in his right hand, and at the man, in a way that suggested very plainly what were his thoughts.

Both Veghte and Father Jonois felt a sinking of the heart, when the man came upon the deck of the sloop. The former seemed to feel that in the part Johnson was to play, there was to be something evil—something producing a collision between them—a collision, too, that would be fraught with sorrow.

Father Jonois, who knew more of him than any person living, who knew the dark heart that beat beneath so calm an exterior, and understood the man, as the latter did not believe any man understood him, could but foretell what was likely to come of this uncongenial companionship. Had he suspected that it was Johnson in the canoe, when first seen, he would have advised the crew to pass on without picking him up; but it was now too late, and our two friends therefore could do nothing less than put the best face possible on the matter.

There was an appearance of cordiality in the manner of Johnson which prepossessed the crew in his favor. Only those two, who understood what it meant, refused to be entirely conciliated. Had Father Jonois chosen to tell how he had striven and toiled with this man, and how the result of

his effort was only a more unmistakable revelation of the black hypocrisy of his heart—had he told this, we say—the reception of Mr. Horace Johnson would have been far different from what it was.

Father Jonois and Veghte retired to the stern of the sloop, close to the man who was steering, and began conversing in low tones.

"You are going to have another companion, on your way to Montreal," observed the former.

"Yas, and I believe I'd rather see Satan himself come on board, than that man."

"There is much evil in his heart. But, you have one consolation, Basil," remarked the priest, smiling in a significant manner.

"What's that?"

"While he is with you, he can not disturb Mariano."

"Does he bother her now?" asked the woman, and fearful his question would not be answered, he hastened to add: "If you can't tell me *that*, don't say any thing more about him."

"He is more dreaded—and with good reason, too—by her than she dreads any other person. She seems never to be free from her fear regarding him."

The manner in which Basil glanced at the subject of these remarks, undoubtedly would have made that man himself slightly uneasy, had he observed it; but Johnson was too much occupied with making himself agreeable to the crew of the sloop to notice either of his two friends.

"Do not bear unjust enmity toward him," said Father Jonois, whose keen eye took in the slightest indication of feeling. "He may not seek to harm you."

"He may not," said the hunter, in a sneering manner, looking at Johnson as he spoke: "but, if he don't, it will be because he hasn't got the chance; he's tried the same thing often. However, it's a business that I'll have something to do with."

The two conversed together awhile longer—Father Jonois endeavoring to soothe the excitement of the woman, who seemed on the point several times of opening hostilities. He even proposed that he should make an excuse for quarrelling with Johnson, in order that he might throw him overboard.

The priest advised him to do and say nothing that should betray the least enmity toward him; to accept of him as a companion to Montreal, but to watch every movement, and when there was treachery upon his part—then he might talk of punishment.

"If you are vigilant, I can not see how he can harm you. You are surely superior to him in woodcraft, and you ought never to give him the opportunity to harm you. If such an opportunity comes, it will be through your own remissness. Take care that it does not."

"There'll be the General and the gal with us, you see."

"Their presence will be an additional protection, I think."

"Don't know; they're both English, and he has always acted with the French. That was the way he done at Presqu'Isle."

"Yes; but he has a great admiration for ladies, and I doubt not that the presence of Miss Montvere will restrain him from any open evil in her presence. He can but see that you are necessary to their safety, and he can not wish to harm *her*, no matter what his feelings may be toward the General or toward *you*."

Ere Veghte could make a reply, Johnson, smiling and self-possessed, came toward them.

"I hear you are going to Montreal, and it gives me great pleasure to hear it, too."

"Why so?"

"Come, as I told you, I am going that way myself, and will be glad to keep you company."

"If it had been me, I'd wait till I was axed," remarked the woodman, entirely disregarding a battery of frowns that was leveled against him by Father Joncis. "Yas, sir, I'd wait till I was axed."

"Veghte will joke," laughed Johnson to Father Joncis, as if to signify that allowance should be made for the vagaries of such a man.

"Not often; he is more inclined to be serious."

The interloper remained by the two men a few moments longer, and then sauntered away and joined a man, a few yards distant. They conversed so earnestly together, and for

such a length of time, that the woodman believed them to be old acquaintances.

In the course of an hour or so, General Montvere came on deck, and beckoned to Father Jonois. As the latter came up, he took his arm, and the two retired to a point where they were not likely to be overheard. The woodman could not avoid noticing that the British officer glanced occasionally toward Horace Johnson, and then toward himself, so that he believed he had good reason to suspect that he, as well as his disagreeable companion, was the subject of inquiry and comment.

At noon a pleasant dinner was partaken of in the cabin, and the succeeding portion of the day passed away much as the preceding. Miss Montvere never once showed herself on deck, and the General spent most of his time below. He possessed an immense amount of papers, which occupied the most of his time, requiring often the additional assistance of his daughter. Occasionally he consulted with Father Jonois for a few minutes, but he avoided all communication with Johnson. The latter made several attempts to approach him, but was received with a chilly haughtiness, which repelled even the assurance that he possessed.

Father Jonois and Basil Veghte spent a great portion of the day in each other's society. The former believed that all his influence was necessary to prevent a collision between the woodman and Johnson. The dislike of the former appeared to increase, until there was danger of its breaking out at any moment. The good father succeeded finally in obtaining his promise not to attempt any violence until there was an unmistakable evidence of evil intention upon the part of the suspected man.

As we have already hinted, none knew so much regarding Johnson as the priest himself. It was this intimate knowledge of his character that made him foresee the danger ahead. So deeply impressed was he with it, that he secretly notified and requested the man to leave the ship, hinting to him the peril he incurred by making one of a party with Veghte. It may as well be stated, also, that Father Jonois' unexpressed belief was that the man had, by some means incomprehensible to him, learned of the contemplated journey of the party to

Montreal, and that, for some purpose of his own, he desired to accompany them. There were grave suspicions troubling the mind of the good man, but he shared them with no one. Basil Veghter would have been the last man to whom he would have given them, but he deemed it his duty to place him on his guard, and he had already done so, in a manner that he deemed all-sufficient.

The "Spartre" had had a taste of a storm on Lake Erie, and came very near going to the bottom of that sheet of water, which is so terrible when aroused. The captain, therefore, surveyed the heavens with great anxiety, as they bowled rapidly along toward the St. Mary's. It was with great apprehension that he read in the sky the omens of a gathering storm. He sheered off from shore, until he was over a mile distant, and then crowded all sail, for he, too, had important reasons for wishing to be at his journey's end. It was late in the season, and he knew that, if the storm did burst upon him, he would be in far more peril than if out on the stormy Atlantic.

The anxiety of Captain Hampton was shared by those around him. General Montvere said nothing of his fear, but all knew that his solicitude was regarding his daughter. For himself, he had faced danger and death too often for their presence now to make a single pulse throb. He would have gone to the bottom as unconcernedly as he paced the deck, if the moment should come. But for Madeline, his only child—she who was a fac-simile of himself in so many respects—for her he could but feel a parent's anxiety. He bitterly regretted, in his own heart, the dire necessity which compelled her to be one of the party, and there was no sacrifice her safety might demand that he did not resolve should be made.

As for Veghter, he, too, felt unpleasantly uneasy. It was that feeling which comes over a brave man when he realizes he is placed at disadvantage. The element of the guide was the wilderness; in that he was ready to combat any thing—storm, exposure, enmity, treachery—he could willingly meet them all. But, on the lake, his peculiar powers could have no play. He was cramped and confused, and, when the storm should come, he was deprived of all ability to strive with it. A thousand times rather would he have been in his frail canoe.

The sloop was an outlandish contrivance, at the best, and he anxiously looked for the time when he might place his foot once more on *terra-firma*. Threading his way through the mazes of a Canadian wilderness, on the look-out for Indian enmity without, and white treachery within, this was the prospect contemplated by Veghte, in somewhat the same manner that one contemplates his return to a cherished duty, after being long absent from it.

We need not attempt, therefore, to depict the relief experienced by all on board the sloop when the ominous appearance of the heavens changed, and the threatened storm passed over. There was a deep sigh of gratitude from every one, and most felt like congratulating each other upon being delivered from an imminently threatening danger.

As the night settled over the lake, the whole heavens became clear, and the moon, nearly at the full, shed a light which illuminated the water for a great distance around the little craft. Most of the sail was taken in, but enough was kept up to keep the vessel under moderate headway.

Late in the evening, Miss Montvere made her appearance upon deck, and, taking the arm of her father, the two paced slowly backward and forward, conversing in a low tone, and occasionally stopping to admire the impressive scenery around them.

Night on Lake Erie a century ago! The sullen wash of the restless waves upon the desolate shore; the interminable line of wilderness which inclosed this inland sea; the sullen moan which forever came from both; all these, united with the consciousness that they were in a vast solitude, where almost every human being was an enemy, impressed even the iron heart of General Montvere. A hush fell upon all, and, when words were uttered, they were brief and subdued, as if all realized they were standing in the presence of a great **overshadowing Power**.

Horace Johnson seemed determined to attract the attention of Miss Montvere. He intruded himself in her way, until the General noticed it, and demanded, in a loud voice, what he meant. He thereupon made a very humble apology, and slunk away, without having drawn a word from the lady.

It struck the woodman that the object of the officer and

his daughter, in pacing the deck, was to tire themselves out, that they might enjoy a night of undisturbed slumber. Filled with this idea, he remarked, as they came up to where he was standing, and were about to turn away again :

"A good plan, General; a good plan—a sure way to get a good night's rest. When I want to snooze comfortable, I sit up three or four nights; then I'm sure to do it. If you walk all night, you won't need to do it to-morrow night."

"We are not doing it for that, Basil. Neither of us have any trouble in resting at night. But the evening is moonlight, it is not cold, and we find it pleasant."

This answer was made by Miss Madeline Montvere, and it came near knocking the woodman clean over. He fairly started, as if a thunderbolt had burst at his feet. Then, as they turned away, he muttered: "Women is queer things, you may shoot me if they ain't!" He was so amazed, in fact, that he appealed to Father Jozois for an explanation. The latter told him, very pleasantly, that he would find Miss Montvere a very agreeable woman; that it was not singular she should have stopped to address him. A great many ladies, beyond question, would have done the same thing.

"It's too deep for me. I can't understand it," he muttered, as he returned to his position. A moment later, General Montvere approached, and the two paused, and conversed for fully half an hour with their guide. The daughter, especially, was very pleasant, and the woodman was fairly dazzled by her brilliance and beauty. When finally she bade him good night, and retired to the cabin, he was resolved that he would brave Indians, perils, suffering, treachery, death—any thing for her sake. It was not love, but a chivalrous devotion, that he felt for one who, it seemed, had been so kind to him. And she was of the same sex as Mariano!

CHAPTER V.

THE LATELY LOST GIRL.

The second was a young man,
 Who with a dress as clean as mine was do,
 Led by a girl who bore the first name;
 A bold lover of his native land - Dan Yonkman.

THE beautiful moonlight night—the impressive scenery of Lake Erie, kept most of our friends upon deck until a late hour of the night. Father Jones was the first to withdraw. He was shortly followed by General Montrose and his daughter. Such of the crew, as were at liberty to do so, had retired to their bunks some time before. Finally the only men left above, were the regular watch, Henry Johnson and Basil Veghte. The latter was standing at the side of the boat, near its center, leaning on his rifle, as was his custom when in reverie, and looking out upon the moonlight sheet of water. Johnson was at the stern, so that there was little probability of communion between them, as long as they retained their present positions.

Matters remained in this condition for perhaps an hour, when the wind, which had been gradually falling since darkness, so died away that the "Spartan" just kept up a perceptible motion. Veghte being emphatically a landman, had decided that they were entirely at rest; but by scrutinizing prominent objects on the land, he observed that they still were moving—just enough to be perceptible. At length, however, the rudder became entirely ineffectual, and the vessel was dropped in twenty fathoms of water.

It chanced that, at the moment the anchor of the "Spartan" was cast overboard, the ship itself was within a short distance of shore. Exactly how this happened the man at the helm was unable to tell. He had done his utmost to keep the boat fully two miles away, but, in spite of his efforts had drifted continually toward it, until, as a matter of course, it became

necessary to cast the anchor—otherwise the sloop would have drifted ashore. The want of motion explained the want of the usefulness of the rudder, but did not show why the vessel should have continually approached the land.

When the sloop was fairly immovable, those on deck minutely examined their situation. The proximity of land, and the light of the moon were such that a view almost as good as the day could have afforded, was gained of the peculiar configuration of the shore and woods.

Veghte was still absorbed in reverie, when the man left the rudder and came to his side.

"You're a man of the woods, and used to Injin ways and devilments, and I make bold to ask you what you think of our situation."

The guide turned around and confronted the man, as if he failed to comprehend his meaning.

"What'd you say?"

"You observe how close them woods be, and you know as well as I do what a lot of the dogs are in 'em, and what I want to ask is whether you think there is any danger of them coming out in their canoes, and attacking us. You see we're in rather a bad fix, and we hain't got a capital of wind to take us farther out to sea, if they should come."

Veghte indulged in a characteristic laugh.

"What made you come so close in to shore?"

"I couldn't help it! Didn't you hear me grunt and strain at the tiller, and all for no good too? I got the courses headed for the south once, but it warn't no use. If I hadn't stopped here, I'd been stiff on shore in less than a half-hour."

"Going to stay here till mornin'?"

"I intend to remain till the wind comes up again. If we don't have any more to-night, we'll be purty sure to get it when the sun gets up above the woods. Do you s'pose any of the Injins on shore have got their eyes fixed on us?"

"Don't think they have, but then they're like that steering thing of your'n—you can't depend on 'em. There may be a lot of 'em right in the woods there, with their eyes fixed on us."

It was plain that the man was somewhat startled at this view of affairs. Brought up on the salt water, his terrors

were all located on the land, while the contrary being true of the woodman's education, it was ~~vice-versa~~ with his fears.

"Heaven! we must call up the General, and get ready to repel the boarders," exclaimed the steersman, in considerable excitement.

Veghte again laughed—more heartily this time than before.

"You needn't do any such thing. It'll be time enough when we see 'em."

"But they may come on us sudden—before we can get ready for 'em! What'll we do then?"

"No danger," complacently replied the woodman. "No danger; you're too skeerish to be in the woods."

"But it won't do any hurt to be ready: it'll be a mighty sight better than to have 'em come on us, when we want help ourselves."

"I guess you don't like Injins."

"I rather guess I don't! I've seen 'em afore. I was on that schooner that went up to Detroit to help Gladwyn, when they came out at night and tried to board us. I was on watch too, and was one of the first that seen the imps coming out in their canoes."

"They got more than they expected that time, didn't they?"

"Yes; we dressed 'em out scientifically; but, they was fools for letting us do it. They had the upper hand, when our captain sung out for some one to touch off the magazine, when you ought to 've seen 'em pitch and tumble overboard! That's what saved us!"

"I don't think," said Veghte, speaking seriously, "that we're in such danger as that. You see, we've just got here, and it bein' night, tain't likely that any of 'em has sot eyes on us. A vessel like this ain't often seen in these parts."

"I know it ain't, but the war has l'arnt 'em what it is."

"If we was conveniently located, and there was plenty of 'em, and they was purty sartin of findin' us all asleep, they might take it into their heads to make us a visit. But then we ain't exactly where they'd like to have us—there ain't many of 'em about, and we ain't asleep."

The sailor was considerably reassured, by the confident

manner of the scout, but it was still evident that he was not free from apprehension. He continually turned his gaze toward shore, and plied the woodman with all manner of questions. Veghte answered him as far as he was able, and it is safe to say that the individual in question learned more of woodcraft on that night, than had ever entered his head before.

Horace Johnson, from some cause or other, refused to mingle with any of those upon deck, but remained apart, apparently in thought. Veghte now and then stole a glance toward him, but was too well satisfied with his reticence to break his self-communing. The woodman was seriously meditating going below for the remainder of the night, when the timid sailor at his elbow uttered an exclamation:

"See there! see there!"

Turning his head toward shore, Veghte was considerably amazed to see a point of light glimmering through the woods. It appeared a few rods from the margin of the lake, and was unmistakably the light of a camp-fire.

"What do you think of that?" demanded the seaman, in excitement.

"Quar," was the laconic response.

"Ain't it jus' what I told you?"

"I d'n't know."

"I tell you it means danger."

"Dunno 'bout that'."

"What ~~else~~ can it be?" asked the man, betraying some indignation at the immobility of the woodman.

"Wait till we see who's thar'."

It did not escape the eye of the suspicious guide that Horace Johnson manifested a most extraordinary interest in the light which had just attracted their notice. The moment the exclamation was uttered, he passed over to the opposite side of the sloop, and in his anxiety, leaned far over the gunwale, and closely scrutinized the shore, as if he would penetrate the depths of the concealing woods. This single act of Johnson's did more to alarm Veghte than an open profession of hostility could have done. Like vivid lightning, flashed the thought through his mind that the man had come aboard for the purpose of working the destruction of the sloop and all on board.

General Montvere—a man high in the confidence of the British Government—would he not be a valuable prize for the French? What though the war between the two nations was nominally at an end, what could be more acceptable to the irresponsible French commander in America than the destruction of an officer who had wrought them such ill? Were there not hundreds who would not hesitate at the death of this man?

So strong was the belief upon the woodman, that he took a step toward the cabin, for the purpose of arousing General Montvere, and placing him upon his guard; but his habitual prudence restrained him. There was no certainty that such was the case, and in so important a matter, it was necessary that nothing should be done without deliberate thought.

In the mean time, the sailor whose suspicions had caused him so much trouble from the beginning, was plying him with all manner of questions."

"The General ought to know it."

"What good will it do him?"

"Why, won't we need him? Won't we need every one?"

"I s'pose you'd give that gal a gun to fight, too, wouldn't you?" asked Veghte, with condescending contempt. "P'raps you'd better take to the boat and put out to sea, as you say, when we're on Lake Erie all the time. Maybe you might get away from 'em by that means."

"I don't see the use of trifling with a man's feelings, when you know as well as me that we're all in the greatest danger of our lives."

The man seemed hurt, and was about to walk away, when Veghte called to him.

"See here, my friend, you're too much scared. You wouldn't do for an India fight, nohow. I don't think there's any need of getting the folks up."

"Do you really feel easy about it?"

"The fact is just here," said the guide, lowering his voice so that it couldn't reach the listening ear of Horace Johnson, "there may be deviltry in them woods, and there mayn't again."

"But that fire?"

"Says there ain't, in the strongest kind of way. If they

meant harm, what would they go to build their camp-fire right there for? To let us know they were about, I s'pose."

"I know nothing about them," rejoined the sailor, who seemed to think this question was meant as a slight upon his judgment.

"I'm only putting it to your common sense. That ain't the Injin way of doing things."

"S'pose there is a savage encampment there, as I make no doubt there is, ain't it likely there's a big war-party close at hand? Couldn't they have come there without knowing any thing about us? And when they find us becalmed out here, what's to hinder 'em from coming out in their canoes, making us prisoners and taking us into the woods, tying us to trees, and burning us to death?"

"Don't talk so loud," admonished Veghte, in a whisper; "that fellow there is trying to hear what is said. What is to hinder 'em you ask? Have you forgotten them two cannon you've got stowed and pointed out? Well, if they should try to board us, jist point them big guns toward 'em and blaze away. You'll see 'em scrambling and scattering than you did when you was going to blow up the magazine of the schooner."

"But look! Isn't the light getting larger?"

"Dunno but what it is. You may take that for a good sign."

"If it should go out, I s'pose 'twould be the contrary."

"Yess, I think 'twould strike me that way."

"What do you say, then?"

The words were yet in the mouth of the sailor, when the light of the camp-fire was extinguished almost as suddenly as if it had been sunk in the depths of the lake. The guide moved a moment or two without speaking, to make sure that such was really the case, and then he shook his head. He understood what all this meant.

"They haven't moved at all a few minutes ago," he remarked, by way of explanation, "and then they've covered up their fire, for fear we might see it."

"They intend to attack us, don't they?"

"Dunno; maybe they're afraid we're going to attack them, and have put out their fire, so we can't find 'em."

"That don't look likely, for what would hinder them from goin' further into the woods?"

"Nothin' at all; but Injin is Injin, and they'd rather stay around their camp-fire, and keep their eyes on us. It's the best place for 'em to do so, and they must be sure we don't see 'em."

"Isn't it best that we should wake the General up?"

"What do you want with him? What's he good for?" demanded Veghte.

"He is the commander, and he might direct us."

"He'd be a purty one to direct us," repeated the woodman contemptuously. "The best thing we can do is to let him snooze."

"But that priest?"

"Never mind about him. I never know'd him to fire, and you might as well let him alone."

"There be several of our men below."

"Let 'em keep on bein' there. We don't need any help at present. Are you sure them cannon be well loaded, and that they'll go off easy?"

"There's no danger about that."

"Jest have 'em good and ready, and if any of the canoes undertake to come out, just bang into 'em. That'll scatter 'em, as I told you afore, and will bring your Ginerel, and the rest on deck as soon as you'll need 'em."

The man left the woodman for a few moments, and minutely examined the two guns which the sloop carried. These, with the help of a companion, he managed to turn toward the shore, which operation seemed to afford him much relief. There were two men only, it should be remarked, of the sloop's men present on deck. The rest, four in number, exclusive of General Montvere, were below asleep. It will thus be seen, that the force who were prepared for the emergency numbered four men, and one of these fell under the strongest suspicion of treachery. It may, therefore, occasion wonder that Veghte should refrain from calling the additional help on deck, when every arm was so precious in case of the danger that threatened assuming any definite form.

But the truth was, the woodman was very doubtful of any attack being made by the Indians. Had the sloop been

be calmed for a day or two, the matter would have been entirely different. The savages then would have been given time to congregate and lay their plans, and there would have been little doubt of an attempt being made to capture them before morning. But the "Spitfire" had come gently to anchor after nightfall. The red-skins, to all appearance, knew nothing of the presence of the sloop upon the lake, until a short time before. The only view that looked to real danger was the supposition that a large war-party were encamped upon shore, and that, by a singular coincidence, the sloop had come upon them. Even then a direct attack was scarcely to be feared. They would wait till near midnight, and in the hope of finding the crew asleep. A vigorous reminder that they were awake, would decide their intentions in a very few moments.

The sailor had finished examining and preparing the two guns, when he returned to the woodman.

"They are ready, and are good for one broadside. You think there is no need of calling the other two men on deck?"

"Not just now."

Horace Johnson at this moment came up.

"Basil is right—not the least danger; no need of even both of you on deck."

"If you say that, you may go below, and call up Father Jonois and the two men."

And, somewhat amazed, the sailor turned to obey the command.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NIGHT-GUN.

Unhunted, on their foes they fiercely flew;
As fierce the dusky warriors crowd the fight;
Despair inspires; to combat's face they die;
With groans and shouts, they rage, unknowing flight,
And close their sullen eyes, in shades of endless night.

—DR. DWIGHT.

THE sailor had scarcely gone below, when Basil Veghte detected a long, dark object moving slowly along under the

shadow of the bank. His experienced eye told him at once that this was a canoe, no doubt filled to its very gunwale with armed and murderous Indians. He scrutinized it as closely as the darkness would permit, observing at the same time, that it had attracted the notice of Johnson. It kept closely under the shadow thrown out by the overhanging trees, so that, unless in motion, it would probably not have been discerned at all. It moved very gradually, and the ear, although strained and listening, could not detect the faintest ripple of a paddle.

A moment later, Father Jenois made his appearance, and directly behind him, came the two men. Vegite was about to speak to the former, when he observed Johnson saunter, apparently in a careless manner, toward one of the cannon. The woodman instantly raised the hammer of his rifle, determined to shoot the man if he detected the least attempt at trifling with them. Whether he really suspected this, or whether he did not intend to interfere with the pieces, can not be known with certainty; for, without pausing, he took a turn on the deck, and came back to the position he had occupied. Here he moodily and silently contemplated the reinforcement that had just come on deck.

By this time the canoe had gone so far down the lake, that it was undistinguishable in the gloom of the shadowed shore. The woodman endeavored to locate it; but his attention having been diverted by Johnson, he was unable to do so with any certainty. His conclusion was that the Indians had purposely done this to get beyond the sight of any who might be on the look-out on board the sloop. When far enough away, they would boldly put out on the lake, and approach their prey from a different direction from that which would naturally be expected.

"What is the matter?" inquired Father Jenois, so soon as he was able to draw the guide aside.

"There are red-skins out there."

"Why are you waiting here?"

"There is no wind to take us away, I believe."

"You are certain there are savages there?"

"I've seen their camp-fire, and a canoe full of 'em."

"Do you think they will attempt to board the sloop?"

"Shouldn't wonder if they did. See here, father," added Basil Voghte, in a still lower tone. "I've got a good deal to do, and won't have time to watch that Johnson. Jus' keep your eye on him, and if you see any thing that doesn't look right, let me know."

The priest said nothing, and the guide took it for granted that he had complied with his suggestion.

"General Montvere ought to be aroused," said the former. "I will go below and apprise him of the danger."

With these words, Father Joreis descended into the cabin. He was gone but a few moments, when he reappeared, closely following the officer. The latter was as deliberate and void of excitement as if he had come on deck for the purpose of a promenade; but the glitter of his fiery eye was seen by all as he inquired, in his short, peremptory manner:

"Where's the enemy?"

"But a few hundred yards away—along the shore—evidently waiting to find us off our guard."

"Let every one arm himself, and take his station."

These words revealed General Montvere to the men around him. He was no more a simple passenger on board the "Sphire." He was commander—the directing spirit now that the impending danger had assumed a tangible form. His appearance and manner made every one feel his vast superiority, and even Basil Voghte, who would have naturally been looked upon as the adviser, felt awed and humbled in his presence. The feeling of respect was greatly increased by the General calling him to him, and saying:

"Basil, you know more of these red-skins than I do; I shall depend principally upon you to keep me warned of their movements. If they attempt to board us, we will give them a taste of what Britons do in that line."

"All right; it ain't midnight yet, be it?"

"Very nearly," replied the General, examining a massive gold repeater by the light of the moon. "Why do you ask?"

"That's about the time the reds generally try to come it over us. They are apt to think we don't wake so easy, as we do a little sooner."

"We shan't have long to wait then—for it now lacks about a quarter of twelve."

"Bein' they hain't got watches, I can't say that they'll hit the minute 'xactly, but I opine they won't come far from it."

"Basil," said the General, "what do you think of that man who came on board after you did? Johnson, I believe, he is called?"

"I don't like him," was the blunt reply.

"Father Jonois told me some things about him that make me rather suspicious. Have you any proof that he is an enemy?"

"Can't say that I have. He was an enemy afore the war begun. He was with the Injins when they 'tacked us at Presq' Isle."

"I have been told that he took no part in that contest."

"I've heerd the same, but if he didn't take any part, he'd no business with the red-skins."

"Yes, Basil, he had a right to take which side he chose; but if he is a traitor, he has no business with us. He must be watched. Until he does something that we are sure is intended to injure us, we are bound to keep our hands off."

"All right—just as you say."

General Montvere now busied himself in stationing his men, and making every preparation for the expected assault. He instructed each to be careful and not expose himself more than was necessary, as it was important that the Indians should have no idea of the force opposed to them. If the war-party was of much size, they might persist in the assault, in the face of a vigorous resistance, in which case all on board the sloop had good reason for grave fears regarding the result. The French and Indian War had afforded more than one instance of a crew, fighting with the bravery of desperation, being overcome by savages, who swarmed on board, and literally overwhelmed them with numbers.

The cannon were double shotted, and each man was furnished with twenty rounds of ammunition. Horace Johnson manifested as great an interest as the commanding officer himself. He possessed a fine rifle, and was abundantly supplied with ball and powder. The only thing noticeable in his conduct was an occasional expression of his belief that this precaution was unnecessary, as the Indians were not numerous

or courageous enough to attack a sloop, even if they suspected the majority on board were asleep.

Miss Montvere remained unconscious of the preparations for deadly conflict that were going on so close at hand. Of course, it was the desire of her father that she should not be alarmed or disturbed, and he ordered that the preparations should be conducted with all the silence possible.

Father Jonois took no part in any thing. He remained leaning against the mast, his arms folded, and apparently occupied in reverie. All seemed to understand that he was emphatically a non-combatant. The respect entertained for the man made them very careful of his feelings. Not the least hint or insinuation ever reached his ears regarding the propriety of his course. General Montvere treated him with great tact and delicacy.

"The Indians can not know the number of men we have on the sloop. I only wish they were aware of *one* man who is with us."

"Who is that?"

"Father Jonois."

"And why he?"

"He is known and respected so universally, that I am convinced they would not fire a gun for fear of injuring him."

The worthy man smiled.

"I can not be so certain about that. They have sent their ball is rather thickly about me more than once. Still, I do not think they would wish to harm me."

"Let me urge you to go below when the contest begins."

"No; I will remain here; but, General, you speak as though certain of trouble—"

"I do feel so, indeed; but—"

The officer was interrupted by Veghte, who, in rather an excited manner for him, exclaimed, cautiously: "They're comin'!"

Following the direction indicated, a long, dark object was seen, several hundred yards away, bearing down slowly and cautiously upon them. Its identity was unmistakable.

"How many Indians are there?" inquired General Montvere.

"In the neighborhood of twenty—perhaps one or two more," replied Father Jonois.

"Bring the cannon to bear upon them," ordered the officer.

"Wait a minute," ventured Basil Veghte. "They'll shy one way or the other afore they come much nigher."

They were coming from such a direction, that, if continued, their canoe would come directly under the stern of the sloop—a course such as to make it almost impossible that the cannon could be brought in play against them. The woodman was right. The prow of the canoe was turned toward the shore, for a moment or two, and then its course was again directed toward the sloop. This was just as General Montvere and his men wished. All that remained was for the gunner to await until they brought themselves fairly in his range, and then to blaze away.

Each was at his station, and all was so still that the soft ripple of the Indians' paddles was plainly audible. Even their paint-bedaubed faces, too, seemingly could be distinguished in the bright moonlight, and more than one on board the sloop fancied he could make out their dark, glittering orbs. This, however, was purely fancy, as the obscurity was too great to allow any such minute scrutiny.

General Montvere had arranged that the discharge of the cannon should be the signal for each to fire his piece into the approaching war-party. This broadside, it was believed, would throw them into confusion, and effectually repel the assault. If they persisted in boarding, all were immediately to load, and fire again, and then make ready to receive them.

When this silence was becoming oppressive, a jet of flame suddenly spouted from the side of the "Spitfire," and the boom of one of its cannon went resounding along the shore. Almost simultaneously, followed the sharp crack of the rifles, and the splashing of water, and the yells of the wounded Indians, as they sprung overboard. The canoe was seen to halt a moment, and then to shoot backward, and make rapidly for the shore.

"Give it to them!" shouted General Montvere, now fairly aflame with the fury of battle. "Give it to them again!"

A single rifle responded. Basil Veghte had reserved his fire, and now sent it directly among the miscreants with a fatal effect. Ere he or any of the crew could reload, the boat had gone in under the shadow of the shore, and, undoubtedly,

each red-skin had disembarked, and taken to the protection of the woods.

The cannon, when discharged, had not injured a single Indian. Its charge had struck the water but a few feet from the canoe, and sent a perfect cataract over the inmates, frightening them as thoroughly as if the Great Spirit had hurled a thunderbolt in their midst. The riles that were immediately fired had badly wounded several; but Basil Veghte was the only one that brought a savage low. A result truly as singular as fortunate for the assaulting party.

A silence, as deep and profound as before, followed this sudden uproar. During the moment of contest, Father Jonois had never once changed his position from leaning against the mast. He coolly awaited the approach of Basil Veghte, who remarked:

"Didn't amount to much, after all."

"You think the contest is over?"

"Yes; you won't see any thing more of them for awhile."

"I am glad. They must have calculated on a surprise."

"That was it; they'd never come if they hadn't."

General Montvere now joined them. Taking out his watch, he smilingly remarked:

"Only a few minutes past twelve. If they meant to attack us at midnight, they were pretty correct in their calculations. What do you think, Basil? Shall we be troubled more by them?"

"Not to-night—that's sart'in. They didn't expect no such works as that, and they ain't likely to want to see it again."

"I don't think the cannon killed one of them."

"No; it come jus' nigh 'nough to miss every one."

"It gave them a good scare, at any rate, which will insure our safety. We may as well station our watch and go below. Miss Montvere must be greatly alarmed by the discharge of guns."

The General disappeared, and, after having explained what had happened to his daughter, came on deck, and ordered all below, except one of the men and Basil Veghte, who had expressed his intention of remaining above until daylight. Horace Johnson ventured to demur at the command, as he said it would be impossible for him to sleep after the exciting

events that had occurred. The officer, however, was imperative, and he was compelled to assent as gracefully as he could under the circumstances.

In a few moments, then, the woodman and his companion were left alone upon the deck of the sloop. It was now about one o'clock in the morning, and the air was quite chilly. Veghte paced back and forth, occasionally pausing to glance over the water, to make sure of no enemy's covert approach. While he believed the danger was gone, yet there was no absolute certainty, and he was not willing to trust the safety of himself and the others to an inexperienced sailor, who knew little or nothing regarding American Indians. The seaman several times endeavored to initiate a conversation, but the woodman was in no mood, and he was speedily left to himself.

Affairs remained in this state for perhaps an hour, when Veghte paused at the stern of the sloop, and gazed out upon the lake. He was looking mechanically around, not expecting any thing unusual, when he was once more startled by the sight of a canoe. It was out on the lake, in such a position that the sloop was about half the distance between it and the shore.

"That ar's queer," he muttered. "Be the red-skins going to come a new dodge over us?"

The canoe in question was a small one, and contained but a single person. It appeared to be stationary, as if its occupant had been seeking and had found a good position from which to reconnoiter the sloop. The woodman called his telescope in requisition, but it afforded him little assistance. He viewed it from several points, but could make out nothing definite regarding it. It suddenly struck him that this was some Indian desirous of communicating with Horace Johnson. With this conviction, he raised his rifle, confident that he could pick off the savage. His eye was running along the glistening barrel, when he lowered his piece with an exclamation of wonder.

He believed that to be Mariano, and the Mystic Canoe!

CHAPTER VII.

THE NIGHT-CHASE.

"Still to the white man's wants there is no end;
He said, 'beyond those hills he would not come';
But to the western seas his hands extend,
Ere yet his promise dies upon his tongue."

THE woodman again examined the canoe, as closely as was possible by the light of the moon. It was of the same size, and resembled, so far as he was able to judge, that in which he had seen Mariaho visit the islands. Whether the girl was really in it or not, of course he had no means of determining with any certainty. There were hundreds of Indian boats of the same size as the one she generally used, and there was apparently no reason why he should think that it was her who had occupied so much of his thoughts for a year or two past.

There were several reasons that pointed against the probability of its being Mariano, the Chippewa girl. In the first place, the sloop had come such a distance since morning, that it would have required a person exceedingly expert in the use of the paddle to have reached this spot by midnight. But who was more skillful than Mariano? Taking this reason, then, while it was improbable, it was not at all impossible that it should be her. Then, why should she come such an unusual distance from the spot which she haunted? What object could have drawn her hither? Had the presence of Father Joneis or Horace Johnson any thing to do with it? Was his own presence, or the contemplated visit of General Montvere to Montreal, an influencing motive?

Such were the questions that presented themselves to the woodman, as he stood surveying the canoe and its statue-like owner. Now and then he caught the flash of a paddle, as if he or she were employing it only to maintain the same position. Finally, he became satisfied that, whoever it might be, the person did not intend approaching any closer, and he

decided on a proceeding that would help him identify its occupant. Walking to where the sailor was stationed, he said :

"There's somebody out there in a canoe, and I'm goin' out to find what he wants, if I can."

"How you going to do so?"

"In your boat, in course."

The latter, it will be remembered, was a canoe, so that Basil Veghte would be perfectly at home when seated in it. However, the sailor deemed it his Christian duty to warn the rash man of the dangers he was about to incur by his recklessness.

"Them Indians are strange people, so I must tell you to be careful."

"Ah, you know somethin' 'bout 'em, then?" remarked the woodman, with all apparent seriousness.

"Yes, I know a good deal."

"Where'd you l'arn it?"

"I've read Captain Smith's narrative, who was taken, many years ago, and saved by Pocahontas."

"Don't say, now; I've heard of the same person."

"I'd advise you to read that book. You'll get a good idee of the ways and manners of the Indians."

"I'd be powerful anxious to read the book. Have you got it with you?"

"Yes; I brought it from England, and have carried it ever since. It's down in my trunk now."

"Bein' as I don't know how to read, couldn't I git you to take the time some day to read it to me?"

"If I had the time, perhaps I might do so."

"Yas, I'd be glad to have you."

By this time, the simple-hearted sailor began to have a dim idea that the over-seriousness of the woodman covered a disposition to trifle with him, and he suddenly checked the conversation. Basil made several farther inquiries, but they were not answered, and he turned to the business before him.

The canoe was so light and fragile that our hero had no difficulty in letting it down upon the water. He did it with great precaution, taking the side toward the shore, so that Mariano—if it really was her—should not take alarm too soon,

and flee before he could satisfy himself regarding her identity.

Coming cautiously around the stern of the "Spitfire," he peered out upon the lake. There sat the canoe and its occupant, as motionless as an hour before. The woodman gazed at it a moment, and then, settling down in his seat, took the long Indian paddle (which, though not used by the crew of the sloop, had still been allowed to remain there), and then shot like an arrow over the water, straight toward the Mystic Canoe.

Veghte felt a strange thrill pervade his whole being, as he engaged in this exciting pursuit. He almost feared to come directly up to her, and he looked fearfully to see whether she fled or not.

About one-half the intervening distance was passed before the stranger took the alarm. Then a paddle was seen to flash in the water, and instantly her boat went skimming forward like a bird.

At this moment Veghte ceased his labors, and cast a searching look at the strange canoe. It was Mariano, the Chippewa, who was guiding it!

This discovery, at any other time, would have palsied the woodman or turned him back, but it did not on the present occasion. Some strange impulse drew him on, and he bent all his energies toward impelling his frail boat forward. For a moment or so he perceived that he was gaining, but at the end of that time, Mariano's matchless skill began to tell. Strain to his utmost, he could not lessen, by a foot, the intervening distance; and it was not long before he discovered that he was not even holding his own. Still he persevered, until, yielding to a feeling for which he could never account, he suddenly ceased his labor, and called out, in a voice of touching pathos:

"Mariano! Mariano!"

The girl ceased her labor for a moment only, and then resumed her strain. It was sad to see the earnestness of the great, simple-minded woodman, as he called out in that subdued, but pleading voice:

"Mariano! Mariano!"

Fainter and fainter grew the Mystic Canoe, until it seemed a motionless point of gloom in the distance, and then disap-

peared altogether. For several moments, Basil Veghte sat looking toward the place where it had faded from view, as if he expected it to come back again, and then, satisfied of the absurdity of his hope, he heaved a great sigh, and dipping the paddle in the water, started on his return to the sloop.

When the woodman started on his return, he had long left the sloop out of sight; but he had little fear of losing it, as he understood the direction he had taken, and had a pretty correct idea of the distance gone over. When, however, he judged it should be visible he saw nothing of it. A few moments later, either of two things became certain. He had lost the sloop or it had changed its position. It was not probable that the former was the case, as his many years' experience made it almost impossible for him to commit such a blunder. As to the latter—ah! he felt the wind blowing on his cheek that minute! No doubt the sloop had changed her anchorage, to escape the proximity of the Indians—but she could have gone no great distance, as the crew must be aware of his absence. Still he experienced some uneasiness, when he looked around and saw nothing of her.

“Qu’ar! she oughtn’t to be far away!” he soliloquized. “There be the woods, and here I am—now where’s the *Spit-fire*, as they call her? If they’ve left the place where they first dropped anchor, they can’t have gone far.”

Approaching somewhat closer the shore, he took a westerly course, paddling very slowly, and looking in every direction for the sloop. At the same time, he did not forget that enemies were at no great distance, and that under the bright light of the moon, it would be an easy matter for one of them to pick him off with his rifle, or to cut off his return to the sloop. Should they attempt the latter, it would be a bad arrangement for all, excepting the savages themselves. He would be compelled to put directly out upon the lake, or to take to the woods for safety. In either case, laying aside the peril to his own life, it would be almost impossible to regain the sloop, as he could possess no means of intelligibly communicating with it. Basil Veghte had therefore great need of caution in his movements.

As a first precautionary measure, the woodman paddled further away from the shore. He saw nothing, however, of his

enemies; but he was beginning to be sorely perplexed at the non-appearance of the sloop, when it suddenly loomed up to view before him—so suddenly, in fact, that it seemed to have come out of the very darkness. It required him but a moment to dart beneath the bow and clamber on deck.

On the Spindle he found the captain and two men anxiously awaiting his return—not that they feared danger to him or themselves; but quite a smart breeze had sprung up, and they were impatient to take advantage of it.

"Didn't catch him?" remarked the captain, as the men proceeded to weigh anchor, hoist sails, and complete their preparations for starting.

"No; he could paddle better than me. I done my best, but it warn't no use. He left me behind in no time."

"I'm glad you're on board at last."

"'Goin' to start, eh?"

"Yes; we've a good wind, from the right quarter, and may as well use it too."

"Had to wake you up, I s'pose?"

"No, sir; I can tell if the wind is blowing when I'm sound asleep, almost as quick as if I was on deck."

"How is that?"

"You'll learn if you ever become a sailor. You can tell by the rippling of the waves against the planks that are just atween you and eternity. You can hear it whistle through the rigging, too, and I can tell you that to-night it was about the finest music I ever heard in all my life."

"You don't seem particularly fond of Injins?"

"No, sir; I've seen too many of 'em. I undertook a little hunt on my own hook down at the lower end of the lake, just afore we started in the sloop. I hadn't been out a half-hour afore I was fired at a half-dozen times, and had to run so hard I hain't got over it since."

"Well, I don't blame you for bein' skeary. They are on-pleasant critters, but somehow or other, I rather like this G. 'em' around with 'em. It keeps a fellow from gettin' lazy."

"You oughter to settle down and stop your wanderin'."

"Think so? Don't believe I could do it."

"Fall in love with some handsome Injin gal, marry her, and then you won't be trampin' all over the world."

The woodman looked in the eye of the captain, as if to see whether there was any covert meaning to his words. But the broad, genial face of the sailor was as honest as the day was long. He had not the remotest idea how near his random shot had struck home.

"When we was coming down the lake yesterday morning, I saw just about the handsomest Injin gal you ever put eyes on. She was out in a canoe. Well, there! if I hadn't had just the purtiest and best little wife in the world at home, I do b'lieve I'd 've fallen in love with her."

"What was her name?" inquired the woodman, endeavoring to conceal his agitation.

"Heaven help me, now! how should I know? Just look at the sloop! Don't she ride the water like a duck? Let the Injins come! Who cares for 'em now?"

The sailor seemed in the best of spirits. He was too honest, and simple-hearted, too, to entertain the slightest suspicion regarding any relation existing between the man before him and the person of whom he had just been speaking. He had taken the helm the moment the sails were set, and his first proceeding was to leave the shore about half a mile to his left. He had a wholesome fear of all enemies that belonged to the American race, and was disposed to give the road to them on every occasion.

By this time it began to grow light, and the woodman went to his hammock to obtain a few hours' rest. It was the first occasion for many and many a month that he had attempted to lie in any thing resembling a bed, and he found it otherwise than agreeable. He persevered, however, and at length passed off into a deep slumber.

When he awoke and came on deck, he found every one that belonged to the sloop already there. General Montvere and Father Jones stood with their backs toward him, conversing with the captain, while Miss Montvere was watching the panorama of the shore that was passing rapidly before her eyes. She turned and smiled as she saw him, and, inspired with a supernatural boldness, he approached to exchange a few words with her.

"This is splendid!" she exclaimed, enthusiastically, as he came up. "How clear the sky is overhead; how beautiful

the forest looks in its autumn tints, and the lake is just rough enough to give us a pleasant undulatory motion as we glide onward."

"Yes, 'tis kind o' nice, though I hain't exactly got the hang of things on this thing you call a sloop."

"Nothing could be more magnificently, superbly grand!" exclaimed Horace Johnson, stepping forward, hoping to elicit a word or look from Miss Montvere.

The latter, in the most delicate and self-possessed manner in the world, turned her back upon him, and continued speaking to Basil Vegite. The scout could but feel a thrill of savage pleasure as Horace Johnson, discomfited for once, wheeled on his heel and departed.

"You are more accustomed to those little boats they call canoes, I suppose."

"Yes; I generally travel in them. You see, I can do as I please in them, while you can't in a contrivance like this."

"But in storms!—how much better the sloop."

"Bless your simple-hearted soul, you don't know nothin' about it! I've been out on Ontario when an old lumbering thing like this wouldn't have staid above water while you could have winked both eyes, and I felt just as safe as if I was on dry land."

Miss Montvere smiled at the guide's earnestness. Ignorant though he was, and unused to the customs of society, she could but respect his manly independence and great simplicity of mind. Father Jones had told her much regarding him, and she looked up to him with great confidence. A single expression, inadvertently made by the priest regarding Horace Johnson, had so prejudiced her against him that she was resolved never to exchange a word with him. He had received more than one decided rebuff at her hand. Perhaps, however, could she have looked a few hours into the future, she would have acted somewhat differently toward him—much as she disliked him.

"I have learned to think a great deal of this vessel, from having spent so much time on it. I shall part from it with regret."

"I shan't, for, hang me, if I don't feel uneasy every minute I am on it. When I went to rub my eyes this morning I

pitched out of my hammock right on my head. It's the last time I'm goin' to try to sleep in one of 'em. I'll go ashore to-night, and camp out as I'm used to do."

"I only wish I could enjoy it as much as you do."

"You will after you get used to it."

"Ah, me! I'm afraid I never shall. You have done so for many years, I suppose."

"Yas; long afore you was born, and 'xpect to for many years yet."

"It is a strange life, indeed—"

"Hello! I didn't think we had got so far along as that. Yonder is the Grand River."

The broad mouth of this inlet of Lake Erie was now plainly seen in the distance. The woodman had made such a miscalculation that he was greatly surprised to find out how far they had advanced. While he and Miss Montvere were silently contemplating the scene, the General came forward.

"A few miles up that river, daughter, and we must bid farewell to the sloop 'Spitfire'."

CHAPTER VIII

THE FOREST TRAMP.

Prince *Mononotto* sees his squadrons fly,
And on our General having fixed his eye,
Rage and revenge his spirit quicken in;
He set a mortal arrow in the string.—GOVERNOR WOLCOTT.

SHORTLY after, the "Spitfire" entered Grand River, which, at its junction with Lake Erie, was broad and deep. Sailing slowly forward, the voyage was continued until noon, when a halt was made, and dinner partaken of on board the sloop. They had now reached a point from which the journey to Ontario was to be continued on foot.

During the passage thither, the shores of the river had been closely scanned as our friends passed along, but not an Indian was to be seen. That they were in the neighborhood, could not be doubted; but this particular portion, at that time, was very sparsely inhabited, and the guide joined the

others in the belief that the beginning of their land-journey would be undisturbed.

Early in the afternoon, General and Miss Montvere, Father Jones, Horace Johnson, and Basil Veight, stood on the shore of Grand River, and waved their farewells to those on board the ship. The latter, after wearing round, started downstream toward Lake Erie, while the little party set their faces toward Ontario and plunged into the Canadian wilderness.

Veight signified his entrance upon his duty, by taking a north-west direction, announcing that it would be followed until midnight. As all knew this course could never lead to Montreal, they were somewhat at a loss to understand its meaning. Not one dissented, however; they had employed this man as guide and they all owed him their obedience.

The manner of traveling was arranged from the start. Veight was to lead, followed by General Montvere and his daughter, who walked side by side, when it was possible. Behind them followed Father Jones and Horace Johnson. The latter and the guide were the only ones in the party who had rifles. The officer always carried two pistols, though none but his daughter was aware of it. Very little luggage was carried by the party. Miss Montvere had a small sachel in the back of her father, that article indispensable to a woman, at all times. Her elegant wardrobe awaited her in Montreal.

The progress of the company was to be graduated by the ability of their charge to stand the fatigues of the journey. Each of the men could travel from rise to set of sun without wearying, but it was far different with the lady. For their provisions, their entire dependence was upon the rifle of their guide. Game of all kinds was so abundant, and his skill so consummate, that none entertained a shadow of anxiety on that point.

They had not taken a dozen steps from the river, when they entered the forest, which might be said to be almost boundless, and which was destined to be so fraught with peril and mishap to the little party. The General and his daughter both were pleasantly disappointed in finding the woods so open that they were traversed with much less difficulty than anticipated.

The guide's instruction was for all his followers not to depend on him to apprise them of danger, but to "keep their peepers peeled." Their peril was as likely to come from one quarter as another, and the most insignificant member might be the first to discern it.

Horace Johnson had comported himself in a proper manner since embarking. Both the General and the guide were disposed to forbid his making one of their number, but each saw that no advantage could be gained by such a course. If he was disposed to do evil, he could trail them in spite of their utmost efforts to prevent it; while, now that suspicion was turned against him, and he was directly beneath their eyes, it would be a more difficult matter for him to harm them. General Montvere was a man who had dealt with traitors before, and was not one to mince matters. Those pistols that he carried beneath his coat had laid more than one man low, and they were ever ready to do the same, should it become necessary. A man whose profession is that of taking human life certainly is not the one to hesitate when the occasion for it arises. Johnson, during the afternoon of the first day of the journey, was not at all obtrusive. He did not seek to force himself upon either the General or his daughter. The guide was too much occupied with his duty to have any time for conversation. Father Jonois, however, was ever kind and respectful, and refused proper conversation with no one.

Thus far the travelers had been fortunate in possessing good weather, but about the middle of the afternoon there came unmistakable signs of a storm. Veghte, who was now in his element, told his friends that it would be upon them by nightfall at the furthest, and the officer in reply requested him speedily to select some place that would be suitable for an encampment, and that would shelter them from the coming storm.

The isothermal line that passes the northern shores of the Great Lakes is very nearly the same as that which touches Upper Norway and Sweden, so that the winter's temperature of Canada, as is well known, is of great severity. A good season of the year had been selected by the General for this journey. There was every prospect of pleasant weather for a week or more, although, if delayed beyond that time, they

would run some risk of being caught in the clutches of a Canadian winter.

Even though in the season of the genial Indian summer, there yet was that lingering fierceness in the air, which was extremely suggestive of what so speedily was to come. In the chilling shadow of the woods, although glowing with exercise, Miss Montvere found necessary all the clothing in her possession. Veghte, well knowing what was to be expected in a few weeks, used all expedition in pressing forward.

All the party were surprised at the endurance of their charge. She kept even pace with her father, never once betrayed weariness nor asked for an abatement of the speed with which they journeyed. She inherited in a degree the iron constitution of the parent. A proper occasion would bring out further points of similarity between father and daughter.

The sun was low in the west, when their guide made an abrupt turn to the right, and approached a huge pine, that to all appearances had been blown down for several years. The mass of dirt, roots and luxuriant shrubbery clustering around its base, afforded a large cavity, and a secure shelter from the storm now almost upon them.

"Gather wood and sticks!" shouted Veghte, as he ushered Miss Montvere into the natural apartment. "Get enough to last all night!"

The four men set to work with so much vigor, that, in a short time, they had a large pile gathered—more than amply sufficient to keep a fire going through the night. The immediate neighborhood looked as if a hurricane or tornado had recently visited it, for trees lay broken and upturned in every direction. Numerous kinds of resinous pine, dry as tinder—the very best fuel they could possibly desire—were collected, and their limbs were fully barricaded. Veghte made it his special duty to gather several armfuls of delicate branches of the green pine, which he arranged in such a manner for Miss Montvere, that it would be difficult to imagine a more tempting couch.

"Now," said he, "we must have something for supper."

"But wait till the storm is over," he remonstrated, placing his hand upon his arm to restrain him.

"That won't be till broad daylight," he answered.

"We can wait until that time before we eat," she hastened to add. "I am sure I would much rather do it than know you were exposed to such a storm as this."

"Certainly, Basil," joined the General, there is not the least need of your going forth to-night. See, how dark it is getting, and the rain will be here in ten minutes. Take my advice and stay with us until morning."

The woodman threw back his head with a spasmodic laugh that seemed to be jerked out of him. "Rain! Storm! do you s'pose it makes any difference with me?"

And ere they could reply he had passed out and disappeared in the fast-gathering darkness.

"There is no use of attempting to dissuade him from any thing he has made up his mind to do," smiled Father Jonois, who had viewed the whole proceeding with a quiet enjoyment characteristic of him."

"But how rash!"

"Not for him. He really cares nothing at all for the storm, and observe when he returns, that he will not even take the trouble to dry his clothes. Ah! it comes this minute!"

The great drops could be heard pattering upon the leaves, while that peculiar wild moaning characteristic of pine woods, sounded forth with a desolate wiliness that pierced the heart of each. The air was chilly, and Horace Johnson set about kindling the fire at once. Little difficulty was experienced in doing this, owing to the excellent materials which had been collected.

With anxious gratification the little party discovered that their shelter was secure against the fury of the elements without. The whirling rain and fierce wind passed harmlessly over their heads, while the fire diffused a genial warmth that could hardly have been less cheerful in an apartment of a house. Being some two or three feet below the surface of the ground, was an additional protection against the cheerlessness without.

"I can not help feeling anxious about Basil," remarked Miss Montvere, when all were fairly in their temporary home. "This is no ordinary storm."

"And he is no ordinary man," returned her father. "Some of us might dread its fierceness, but not he, unless I much mistake his character, Father Jonois."

"Dismiss all fears regarding him. He is the most thorough woodman I ever knew. My greatest fear is that the storm, coming so close to winter, may be its harbinger—in which case the most rigorous kind of weather is to be expected."

"I have been told that Erie, in common with the other lakes, is subject, at all seasons, to these bursts of violence, and that they are generally of short duration," remarked General Montvere, pointedly addressing the priest.

"You have been correctly informed. They are of frequent occurrence, especially in November, and our proximity to the lake makes me hope this is local, and that pleasant weather will speedily return."

"I should feel very anxious—hello!"

The near crack of a rifle burst upon the air, startling every member of the company. Horace Johnson sprung to his feet and glanced around, as if he contemplated a speedy retreat, while the attitude and appearance of each betokened an anxious apprehension of impending danger. They listened for further ominous warning, but, as minute after minute passed away, they ventured to exchange words with each other. It should be remarked that General Montvere and his daughter were seated side by side, on a mass of twigs and undergrowth, that had been intended by Basil Veghte for Miss Montvere alone. Father Jonois was directly opposite, while Johnson stood rather apart, in a position where he could most easily plunge into the darkness outside, should that proceeding become necessary.

"I am afraid all is not well with him," said the lady, in a terrified undertone.

"You are too easily alarmed," returned the father. "We haven't heard Basil's rifle until now, and it may be that he has just come upon some game."

"But how can he see any thing in this darkness?"

"He is certainly as able as any one else," added the priest. "I judge it more probable that it is his rifle than another person's."

"I can not help being alarmed," said Miss Montvere, who

nevertheless began to show some of the courage of her father.

There is something calculated to excite the most intense terror in a civilized being, when he or she becomes conscious, for the first time, of danger, from an utterly savage foe. For a delicate, refined female to realize that she is in imminent peril from that most fierce of all savages and barbarians—the American Indian—it certainly is calculated to arouse every emotion of horror in her heart. Even General Montvere, who had gone into battle with a thrilling enjoyment—to whom the rattle of musketry, roar of cannon, and din of conflict were the most glorious of all music—even he experienced a dread of danger from this terrible foe. But in this moment of dire apprehension, the General's attention was chiefly occupied in watching the countenance and action of Horace Johnson. He observed that the man bent his head and listened and had turned pale—whether from alarm or from the consciousness of the nearness of some expected event—it was impossible to determine. A strong suspicion was taking shape in the officer's mind—a suspicion that a deadly traitor was standing by the fire, and listening for some sound to come out of the darkness. The officer stood with the pistol under his cloak, but he was not the man to shoot down a fellow-being until certain of his guilt.

Little did Horace Johnson imagine how close death hovered over him in that moment when all four stood silent and listening!

Suddenly there rung out a second report of the gun, still nearer than the first.

"He is lost!" exclaimed Johnson, "and is signaling for us to answer him. I will shoot mine to let him know where we are."

"*Do it, and I will shoot you dead on the spot!*"

Quailed and awe-stricken, the man let the stock of his rifle fall to the ground, and gazed with apparent amazement in the face of the British officer, while the other two witnesses, scarcely less astounded, looked silently upon the scene. Such was the tableau, when the bushes were suddenly parted, and Basil Veghte appeared noiselessly in their midst.

"'Sh—there are Injins outside and they're lookin' for us!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE NIGHT-WATCH.

Staring open combat, torches where to run,
 Sudden flash the ambush, aim the hunter's gun,
 Whirl the sky torn-hawk, the war-whoop sing,
 Divide the captives, and pack the scalps they bring.—BARLOW.

"Not another stick!" whispered the woodman, to General Montvere, who motioned as if to add fuel to the smoldering fire. "Not a stick, and we must let that burn out."

For the space of five minutes, not a word was spoken. All looked anxiously in each other's faces and listened, listened. Without could be heard the desolate sighing of the wind and rain through the trees, and the rattling of the drops on the leaves. General Montvere sat half-erect, gazing out toward the darkness, his right hand placed in a suspicious manner beneath his cloak; his daughter's hand resting on his arm, her eyes frequently turned in the same direction. Horace Johnson seemed more agitated than any of the company. He was very pale and trembled perceptibly, glancing often at the woodman. The latter stood in the attitude of a person waiting some expected event, his eyes fixed upon the embers and his head slightly bent. Father Jonois, calm and unmoved as if contemplating some quiet landscape, stood with arms folded, quietly awaiting the turn of events.

When minute after minute rolled away, without any further sound occurring to disturb them, those who held the strained position, gradually relaxed it, and settled into a comparative state of ease, although none were as yet freed from their apprehension.

"Too dark, I think," ventured Father Jonois.

"That must be it," replied Veghte, "but they ain't far away."

"Could you see our fire as you came up?"

"Not a twinkle, till I opened the bushes. You couldn't have got a better place to hide."

"Then why put it out?" inquired General Montvere.

"They may smell the smoke, or they may be luckier than me, and get sight of it."

"How was it?" inquired Miss Montvere. "How did you escape?"

"It wasn't hard dodgin' 'em in the woods. They come onto me rather suddener than I like, but, it didn't take long to give 'em the slip."

"We heard two shots—were they yours?"

"One was—the first. I came right smack into a half-dozen red-skins squatted together. They saw me, and jumped, intendin' to grab me. I blazed among 'em, and then dug out. I got out of the way, and was takin' my bearings to find the tree here, when I pounced into a couple more of 'em. This time it was them that cracked away at me, and it come mighty near boring a hole in my cran'um. If I hadn't been sartin there was so many close around, I'd pitched into them couple and taught 'em better manners. But it wasn't exactly safe just then."

"Heavens! no!" exclaimed Miss Montvere. "Never attempt such a thing. It would be sure death."

The lady's earnestness brought a smile to the faces of all present, and she blushed somewhat at her own impulsiveness.

"Are we going to keep watch to-night?" inquired General Montvere.

"We must never all close our eyes at once. I shall stand watch till morning," said the guide.

"I must insist that I be allowed that duty. You were up all of last night, and we may need you more sorely after a while," half-insisted the General.

"I s'pose you've done such things afore, General?"

"Many a time, when you were a boy. It is no task for me."

"P'raps I'll be needed more to-morrow night, so I'll do it. Keep your eyes and ears open, and if you hear or see *any thing at all*, let me know."

It being concluded that the General was to act as sentinel, the others prepared for slumber. The fire by this time had sunk so low that they could scarcely distinguish each other. The blanket that Veghte always carried with him was generously resigned to the use of Miss Montvere, who needed considerable urging before she would accept it. The rain, too,

had ceased falling, and the occasional dripping of the branches could be heard. This, with the dull, never-ending roar of the Great Lake, was the only sound that disturbed the solitude.

Basil Veghte could not have been more faithful to his trust than was the British officer. The sound of a falling leaf brought his pistol forth, and made him all-occupied in listening; but the night gradually wore away without further incident, and the first gray light that illuminated the woods was hailed both with joy and alarm—joy that the night of gloom and apprehension had departed, and alarm that the real peril was now upon them. Should the now rising sun set upon their good fortune, they might reasonably believe that all was well; but, between the rising and the setting, what was to come?

Veghte, as might be expected, was the first to awake and come forth. He went to a small brook, some distance away, and performed his morning ablutions. He had scarcely returned, when Miss Montvere saluted her father, and he did the same.

"To-day we expect to reach Ontario, I believe?"

"Yes; we ought to hit it afore sundown."

"To-day, then, Johnson must consummate his evil intentions, for I can not help believing he entertains the most dire evil toward us. We must, therefore, keep him under the closest watch."

"We may do all that, and do no good. His plans may be so laid that he needn't do any thing, but just wait for the redskins to come up and take charge of us."

"I begin to fear that a band has followed us along the lake, waiting for the time to seize us. The attack on the sloop looks much like it. You see, we haven't sailed very fast, and they wouldn't have had much difficulty in keeping sight of us."

"Like as not it's all true."

"All that remains for us, is to get forward as fast as possible."

Miss Montvere appeared at this juncture, and the conversation, of course, was changed. The guide laughingly inquired:

"When shall we get our breakfast?"

"We want none; we must not wait, but hurry on."

"Why need we do that?"

"We must. I shall go on alone, if you do not start pretty soon."

"That's the right grit," said the woodman, in a low tone, to General Montvere, who was by no means displeased at the rough compliment.

Father Jonois, in company with Johnson, now came forth.

"A splendid morning, after the violent storm," remarked the latter, in his most pleasant voice. "With such weather as this, there is no necessity of hurrying. If I might take the liberty, I would suggest that we remain encamped here for several hours, in order to prevent Miss Montvere from becoming unnecessarily fatigued."

"It's too dangerous a business to hang around in these parts, when the woods are so full of red-skins," remarked the guide.

"Well, my friends," said the priest, after a moment's pause, "I must bid you good-by for the present."

"What! Are you going to leave us?" asked Johnson, in well-feigned astonishment.

"My destination lies to the south-west. I have delayed myself by coming this much out of my way. Ontario now lies but a few miles to the east of you, and you will soon be out of danger, I trust."

"You think we are then in danger?" pursued Johnson.

"That question I deem answered by what occurred last night. It is all-important that you delay no longer than is absolutely necessary."

"Somehow I can not think we are in such a predicament."

"Then you are mistaken, if such be your thoughts. As I just remarked, it is important that you tarry no longer than you are really compelled. So I shall not keep you waiting by my farewell."

"Sorry we can't send you off with a full stomach," said Veghte, as he took the good man's hand.

"Never mind," smiled the latter. "I shall not want. He who watches over the ravens will take care of me. Be very vigilant, to-day," he added, in lower tones.

"Good-by, Johnson; be circumspect in your movements, for you know there are enemies in these parts. Stand by

these men and Miss Montvere, should danger come too suddenly upon them."

"Of course, of course," he hastily answered, shaking hands with apparent great cordiality.

"Don't forget my parting words."

"Certainly not; certainly not. When shall we see you again?"

"I can not tell; *perhaps sooner than you expect.*"

"Ah! what do you mean?"

But the priest had taken the hand of Miss Montvere. He simply saluted her on the cheek, and then turned to her father. As he did so, he gently pulled the latter aside.

"Be cautious; *you may see me again before the day is done.*"

"Why do you say that?"

"If any thing happens, be hopeful. Don't act rashly."

Father Jonois turned on his heel. A short distance away, he looked back, and waved them an adieu. A moment later he had disappeared among the trees.

General Montvere now remarked that the journey must be resumed at once.

CHAPTER X.

THE LIONS IN CHAINS.

You've trailed me through the forest; you've tracked me o'er the stream;
And ~~struck~~ through the everglade your bristling bayonets gleam;
But I stand as still as the warrior, with his rifle and his spear;
The scalp of vengeance still is red, and warns you, "Come not here."
—G. W. PATTEN.

FATHER JONOIS had scarce disappeared in the forest, when our friends were again under way. Veghte, as before, took the lead, H. and Johnson coming next, while General Montvere and his daughter brought up the rear. The woods were quite open, so that a man could be seen for a considerable distance. The feet made little noise in traveling, owing to the peculiar character of the fallen vegetation, and the swampy nature of the ground. The wet branches would have made it very disagreeable to Miss Montvere had not the guide, in his kindness of heart, brushed against them so vigorously that they

were thoroughly cleansed of superfluous moisture before she reached them.

None of our friends had forgotten the warning of the night before. It was self-evident that there were Indians in their neighborhood, and each member of the little party was on the constant look-out for their appearance. The forenoon, however, passed without any signs of them, and General Montvere's hopes began to rise, at every mile that he left between him and Lake Erie. He conversed with his daughter, and endeavored to free her mind, as much as possible, from the all-absorbing terror that seemed to have taken possession of her.

By noon more than one member of the company experienced the want of food. Selecting a sort of hollow in the wood, protected by a mass of undergrowth, Basil announced that they were to rest until he brought in some food.

"I'm getting kantankerous myself," said he. "I'm bound to fetch in something, if it's a roasted Chippewa. You look as though it wouldn't hurt *you* if you had something," he added, addressing Miss Montvere.

"Indeed I do," she answered, and her faint smile could not conceal the weary heaviness of her body.

"Wal, keep quiet; I'll be back as soon as I can."

The woodman gave General Montvere a significant look, as he slung his rifle over his shoulder and strode rapidly away. The officer observed that Johnson took a seat a dozen feet or so distant, as if he wished to hold no conversation with them. Fully satisfied with this condition of things, he turned his back upon him, and gave his entire attention to his daughter.

"You seem very much fatigued," he observed, as she leaned her head against the trunk of a small tree.

"Yes; I couldn't have walked much farther without rest or nourishment."

"You must be hungry—no supper nor breakfast."

"I am too faint to feel much of hunger, but I suppose I need food. How is it with you, father?"

"It would not come unacceptable, I admit, but to such an old campaigner as myself it makes no material difference. I am only anxious for your sake."

"We can not be very far away from Ontario."

"I trust we shall reach it by nightfall—ah! there goes Basil's gun."

"And, another," added Miss Montvere, her face blanching with the old terror. "He has come upon the Indians again."

"Where's that Johnson?" demanded General Montvere, springing to his feet, and looking around.

"Perhaps he will be back again in a few moments," said Miss Montvere, speaking what she did not believe herself.

"No, indeed; there's treachery at work," exclaimed the officer, drawing his pistol, while his lips were compressed and his eyes flashed fire. "Why did I not shoot that villain when I had him in my power?"

"Had we not better leave, and attempt to reach the lake?"

"We run great risk in doing so, but not so much as by remaining here. We will go."

The thought that flashed upon General Montvere did not occur to his daughter. If the murderous Indians once got upon their trail, there was no eluding them. Unless they could reach their friends there was no possibility of escape. But, with considerable hope, the General pressed forward.

In the mean time, Basil Veghte had set out upon his hunt with a strong hope of success and a speedy return. When a furlong or so away, he reached a small creek, upon the margin of which he saw the fresh tracks of a deer. In the belief that he could secure this valuable prize, he started at a rapid pace after it. A few moments later he caught sight of it, as it was bounding away, and, bringing his rifle to his shoulder, fired.

He observed that the deer was desperately wounded, and started in pursuit, confident of soon capturing him. He had run but a step or two, when he caught his foot and stumbled. At the same instant the sharp, whip-like crack of another rifle broke the silence, and he heard the zip-zip of the bullet as it cut the leaves above his head.

This proceeding insured the deer against farther molestation for the time. As Veghte lay upon the ground, he turned on his back and looked his piece.

"If I ain't mighty misook," he muttered, "that was Horace Johnson's gun. He'll give General Montvere the slip."

He did not rise to his feet for several minutes, purposely

lying upon the ground, in the hope that the assassin would believe his shot to be fatal, and would thus be induced to come forward and expose himself. It is not necessary to say that, if Horace Johnson should do so, his career was destined to a speedy termination.

After keeping his position for some time, the woodman crawled a few rods, and then stealthily resumed his pursuit of the deer. He did not come to his feet until assured that his enemy was misled for the time at least. It was not long before he found the bloody tracks of the deer, and shortly the dead body itself. Dropping his gun, he drew his knife, and at once fell to cutting out the choicest portions to take home with him.

He was thus engaged, his whole attention absorbed in his work, when an unusual sound caught his ear. Turning his head, he saw four Indians, in their war-paint, standing behind him—one holding his own piece, while each was fully armed. Two of them had their faces twisted up in a hideous grin at his discomfiture.

Basil Veghte was taken fairly by surprise for once in his life. In his eagerness to secure his prize, he had neglected the circumspection that usually characterized his movements, and was now fairly in the clutches of his adversaries. There was no escape. It was with a chagrin he never before had experienced, that he held up his arms in token of submission.

"I s'pose it can't be helped. You've got Basil Veghte this time, just because he was such an infarnal fool to let you. Hold him purty fast, for you can't depend on him to stay."

As the savages came up and secured his hands, he detected another footfall, and saw coming forth from the bushes beyond, where, hitherto, they had remained concealed, Horace Johnson, and the identical Frenchman who had been the means of his capture during the siege at Presq' Isle! The latter grinned all over his face, to see the blank amazement of the indignant woodman, now once more in his power. Basil Veghte demanded fiercely whether he and Johnson were the prime movers in this outrage.

"Not at all—not at all—" said the Frenchman; "we are simply lookers-on—amused lookers-on."

"You are after General Montvere?"

"Yes," replied Horace Johnson, who saw there was no necessity for further concealment. "We are bound to have him, and it's about time *your* work was stopped."

The glare of Basil Veghte upon the traitor told plainly what fearful hate was burning in his heart. It was well for the man that the woodman was bound, and that his faithful rifle had passed out of his hands. Approaching somewhat closer, Johnson said, in an exulting whisper :

"I rather think you'll let Mariano alone after this."

"What have you done with her?" demanded the bound woodman, his curiosity absorbing his other emotions for the time.

"Oh! nothing in particular; you so bedeviled her there was no getting nigh her, while you were alive, but I reckon there'll be a chance for me now. He! haw!" he laughed, as some of the scenes of the past day came to his mind; "you didn't 'xactly like my coming on board the sloop, did you? I could see that that General that calls himself Montvere, would rather have had me away, and you didn't like the look of things; he! haw! That man's name ain't Montvere, and we knowed it all the time."

"Who is he?"

"None of your business. We know, and when we l'arned he's going through Lake Eric, we was bound to get him. He's one of the best Generals you've had during the war."

"There's no war now, and what right have you to take him?"

"We'll make a good spec' off of him. We're to get good pay for this little piece of business. He! haw! What made you follow Mariano down along the lake every morning, eh? Queer you never looked behind you. P'raps you might've seen somebody about my size and figure watching you. You never found out what she went in among them islands fur, did you?"

"No; what was the reason?"

"It would never do you any good to know. She's a queer critter, and if she knowed you was in these parts, it would be just like her to foller. I do believe she kinder liked you, 'cause she'd have nothin' to do with me as long as you were around."

"She *hated* you, I know that," returned the woodman, determined on this means of revenge, if he could get no other.

"He! haw! she hain't got much reason to like me. There's a deal about that gal that would do you good to know, Basil, if I was only a mind to tell you, but I ain't."

The guide felt that he was only gratifying the traitor by conversing with him, and he therefore turned his back upon him, but Johnson was determined that he should not go.

"There's a little more, Basil, I can tell you. I have been trying to get you into the hands of the Indians ever since that night you came upon Mariato in the woods. The gal knowed me, but she didn't let you know it. She didn't care any thing about you then. You got away nice, but you don't this time."

"Why didn't you shoot me if you wanted my death?"

"I did try to, a little while ago, but, it seems you wasn't hurt. *'Tain't the first time I tried it, neither!*"

This was more even than Basil Veghte expected. Although strongly suspecting that Johnson had discharged the gun that so nearly took his life, he had no idea of hearing such an unblushing avowal of it, and appended to it the exultant declaration that he had attempted to take his life before. He explained it only on the supposition that he deemed him so securely in the possession of the Indians, that there could never be any after-reckoning between them. Horace Johnson was right in that respect. Our hero now turned to the gigantic Frenchman, resolved not to exchange another word with the base man who stood near him. While this conversation was going on, the Indians stood motionless and silent. It was manifest that they acted under the orders of the Frenchman.

"Johnson, we are losing time, a't we, over this fellow? It's time we paid our respects to General *Montmeer*—*Montmer*—*Montrere*—did you say he called himself?"

"Yes; no doubt that pretty daughter of his is wondering why Basil and me are staying awy so long. I think she'll be a little more ready to speak to e than she was. She put on airs so long as she thought I don't amount to any thing."

The hands of Basil Veghte were securely tied behind his back, and the four Indians, each of whom held a loaded rifle, never once took their eyes from him. They seemed to understand precisely the nature of their captive, as well as the fact that unceasing vigilance was necessary where, in ordinary

cases, carelessness would answer. The woodman walked between them. Horace Johnson and the Frenchman took the lead, traveling side by side, and constantly conversing in an animated manner. The former spoke with a strong accent, but a little attention rendered all he said intelligible. He appeared also to possess a knowledge of the Indian tongue, for he occasionally addressed the savages in words that none besides them understood.

After a time they spoke in such low tones, that it was impossible for Voghte to comprehend their words. They never once glanced backward, seemingly satisfied that their prisoner was perfectly secure. It was not long before the company reached the spot where Johnson had given the slip to General Montvere and his daughter. They showed considerable surprise to find them gone.

"Undoubtedly scared," laughed the Frenchman, "but I don't think they can outrun us."

"The trail is plain enough; let's follow on."

One of the Indians here took upon himself the duty of guide, and the footprints of General and Miss Montvere were followed with such ease that the party suffered not the least delay. About two miles were traveled in this manner, when one of the Indians gave a guttural exclamation, and, looking ahead, all saw General Montvere boldly confronting them, standing as erect and defiant as a lion at bay. Behind him, as firm and motionless, but with a blanched cheek, and an eye full of terror, was Miss Madeline Montvere. The British officer had his arms folded beneath his cloak, which was wrapped around him, and he seemed to look down from some height upon the base crew that were cringing at his feet.

"General, you're my prisoner," said the Frenchman.

"By what right, sir, do you pretend to capture me, when your nation and mine are at peace?"

"Wal, 'tain't me, exactly, you see, but the Indians here. I just come along to see that they treated you and your lady as they ought."

It was plain that the man who was engaged in this disgraceful business, was heartily ashamed when confronted by the upright, honorable warrior, and was endeavoring (like *Æsop's lion and lamb*.) to palliate his conduct.

"I presume, sir, the principal agent in this outrage is that man by your side?" said the officer, glancing at Johnson.

"Yes, sir; *I'm the man!*" exclaimed the latter. "I'm the man that has captured you and your daughter there, that'll be glad enough to speak to me, and beg of me, before many more hours pass over your head——"

At that instant the sharp crack of a pistol broke upon the ear, and Horace Johnson threw his hands up and fell dead on his face, shot through the brain by General Montvere. The latter coolly replaced his weapon, and folding his arms, said to the Frenchman, "I yield myself your prisoner, sir."

"Good!" exclaimed Veghte. "You have sent a man out of the world that ought to have gone long ago."

The Frenchman looked down at the prostrate wretch for a moment, and said:

"He's dead, sure enough. You're a pretty good shot, General."

"What do you propose to do with me?"

"You have some important papers in your possession that I must ask you to give up."

"I refuse, sir."

"I shall have to compel you."

Without thinking, the General at this point glanced at his daughter, as if to warn her to keep silence. The shrewd Frenchman saw at once that the papers in question were in her possession.

"The lady there, I observe, has the documents, which I am rather anxious to obtain. Perhaps it will not be so difficult to compel her to yield them. Of course she would prefer to do so rather than be searched by hands that might be rude."

General Montvere's eyes seemed to flash fire.

"One word, sir; I carry another loaded pistol. The man that insults my daughter will do so with the last words he utters. Let you, or one of these barbarians, take a step toward her, or let you even shock her ears with a word, and that moment you die!"

Erect and firm, the eagle eyes scintillating electric fire, the military cloak wrapped closely around him, the hair white as snow! The lion defending his offspring: chivalry confronting poltroonery.

"I shouldn't allow them to do such a thing, General. You have yielded yourself my prisoner, and I therefore take you at your word. Conduct yourself as a prisoner, and I guarantee you and Miss Montvere honorable treatment."

"You have committed an outrage for which there is no palliation. I desire no words with you, sir."

There was no quailing nor cringing in that soldier. The presence of his daughter had prevented him from shooting him dead, at the same moment with Horace Johnson. He saw that he was the leader of the party, and his death would be the signal for that of his own butchery. Miss Montvere, helpless in the hands of savages! The thought could not be borne.

"I must ask that you accompany us back to Grand River, where we will provide better means for your progress than that of walking."

"Miss Montvere is faint and needs food. Before she undergoes any more fatigue, I insist that she be furnished with something to eat."

"I shall be happy to do so; the deer which your guide brought down is but a short distance away."

Thereupon the Frenchman dispatched one of the savages for the venison, while he began a fire. It was hardly kindled when the Indian returned with a load of the choicest parts of the animal. This was rapidly cooked, and our half-famished friends were provided with a most needed and substantial meal. A few moments were given to rest, when the party set out on their return to Grand River, leaving Horace Johnson's body to lie without a burial.

Basil Veight was silent and uncommunicative. He seemed to feel degraded in the eyes of Miss Montvere. It galled him to appear helpless in her presence when he would have delighted to risk his life for her sake. She spoke to him cheerfully and sought to elevate his spirits, but, it was vain, and she gave over the effort, and devoted herself to her father, who felt keenly his unfortunate situation.

Just at midnight, Grand River was reached. On the bank, but a few yards from the water, the camping-ground was selected. The Frenchman displayed some of the characteristic politeness of his people. He saw that Miss Montvere

was provided with the best meal it was possible to furnish under the circumstances, and provided her also with a couch that was as comfortable as could be desired. General Montvere took these attentions as a matter of fact, and never acknowledged them even by a nod of the head. Every movement of the captive served to show how small he appeared in his own estimation, when contemplating the part he had taken in the day's work.

The gloomy feelings of both the officer and his guide prevented their interchanging any words. They sat silent and moody upon the ground, and when the evening was far advanced, lay back and closed their eyes. The General remained near his daughter, but Veghte seemed anxious to get as far away as possible. When the time came for sleep, the woodman had his feet bound together, so that he was perfectly motionless. General Montvere, after being remonstrated with by the Frenchman, submitted to the same operation, and the entire party lay down in slumber. In an hour all were asleep except the woodman. He was chafing and fretting, and uselessly endeavoring to free himself from the bonds with which he was bound. Finally he gave over the effort, and lay still.

And lying thus, his ears caught the faint, distant sounds of a paddle in the river. He could just make out that it was approaching. Finally it ceased, but a few rods away, and he heard the soft step of some one upon the sandy shore. Then the stealthy approach, and through the gloom he discerned the outline of a person, standing still and habited in the garb of an Indian. While intently gazing, an ember fell apart, and the momentary flicker revealed the face of Mariano, the Ottawa, looking toward the sleeping forms as if in search of some one. At the same instant, the crackling of a twig sounded in another direction, and the next moment, Father Jonois, and three sturdy, fully-armed men, walked up to the camp-fire, as the Frenchman and the Indians awoke.

CHAPTER XI.

A PRIESTLY SURPRISE.

Ah, soothe the wanderer in his desperate flight,
Hide him by day, and calm his cares by night.—BARLOW.

FROM the moment of disembarking from the "Spitfire," up the Grand River, the strong suspicions of Father Jonois had settled into an absolute conviction, that the capture of General Montvere had been resolved upon, and that Horace Johnson was the willing agent of more responsible parties in the matter. With this conviction came a sense of his own duty under the circumstances. All through the late war, he had held the belief that his usefulness was but strengthened by a course of absolute neutrality. Both parties looked upon him as such, and so great was the confidence of all in him, that he was permitted to pass without let or hindrance through both lines.

But, peace now reigned. The abduction of General Montvere was an outrage of which no responsible parties under the French Government would be guilty. The hate that a few persons held toward the officer for the active part he had taken in the struggle, and the knowledge that they could thereby secure some important papers by the proceeding, doubtless incited the whole thing. This being the case, Father Jonois deemed it his duty to do all in his power to thwart the contemplated crime.

In a few questions, he drew from the British officer the precise point, as far as he was able to give, where he expected the vessel on Lake Ontario to be in waiting for him. He then bade them good-by, and our friends supposed that he was making all haste to the station of which he had frequently spoken.

But, once fairly beyond their sight and hearing, Father Jonois turned eastward, and made all haste toward Ontario. Impelled by a painful sense of duty, he advanced with a speed

fully equal to the "double-quick." No thought of food or of impending fatigue discouraged him, but straight onward he went, staff in hand, and a confidence in God that he should be the instrument the prevention of a great wrong.

It yet lacked an hour or two of noon, when the priest caught the glimmer of water through the trees, and a few moments later, stood on the margin of Lake Ontario. Eagerly he glanced up and down the shore, but not a sign of a sail was seen.

"Heaven grant the vessel may not be late," he exclaimed. "A few hours now are worth every thing. It can not be they would keep the General in waiting when it is so important that he should reach Montreal so soon."

He concluded the boat was in waiting at some other point, and, withdrawing further into the woods, he walked a few hundred yards, and then came out upon a sort of cape to make another observation. Less than a quarter of a mile away, in a small bay, his glad eyes saw a second sloop, the very counterpart of the "Spitfire," riding at anchor. Her sails were furled, and she was under secure protection from storm, but in such proximity to the shore that the priest shuddered to think of their unconsciousness of their peril.

"They need warning. Should the Indians become aware of that, they would not be safe for an hour. I have discovered them in good time."

He delayed not, and shortly after, came out of the woods within fifty yards of where the "Dragon" lay. Not a soul did he see on board, and with more misgiving than ever, he hailed them in a loud voice. The words were scarce out of his mouth, when a short, fat, nervous man popped to view and asked.

"Hello! hello! what's the matter? what's the matter?"

"Are you the captain?"

"Yes, sir; what do you want? what do you want?"

"Take me on board immediately. I have important news for you."

"Yes, sir; yes, sir; in one moment."

Shortly after a boat was lowered, under the direction of Captain Foxglove, and Father Jenois was taken on board. His first question was:

"How many men have you?"

"Eight besides myself; yes, sir, eight. I didn't know but what I might need 'em—yes, sir; need 'em."

"You were very prudent in doing so. Your men are needed this minute."

"How? how? how?"

"General Montvere is a few miles away in imminent danger of capture from the Indians. I have come for a number of your men to go to his rescue."

"God save me! God save me! tell me how it is."

"He and his daughter, with a guide, are making their way for this point. There are a party of Indians (Father Jonois deemed it best to say nothing of Johnson) close at hand who are using every effort to capture them."

"Is it possible—possible—possible?" And you have come all this way to obtain reinforcements?"

"That is my object."

"You shall have them—shall have them; but," demanded the exultant captain, turning back and jumping about as if the deck had suddenly become red-hot, "you must be hungry—must be hungry."

The silent priest made answer with a half-smile:

"I admit I am in the need of food, if it will be no inconvenience to you."

"Certainly not—certainly not; excuse me, 'xcuse me, 'cuse me."

"But," said Father Jonois, laying his hand on his arm, "no preparation—nothing but a few swallows."

"All right—linner is set, is set. Come into the cabin, into the cabin."

Captain Foxglove darted into the cabin, as if he had been shot in that direction. The table, as he had remarked, was waiting. He leaped around it a few moments, picking up a plate and setting it down again. Then all of a sudden he was calm and unemotional as the priest. He was a man who, at the first dawn of danger, became almost beside himself with nervousness; but it required but a few moments to gain perfect control of his nerves, and when the real peril came, he was as cool and unexcited as if he knew not a particle of fear. His change of manner was so marked that his guest looked up in wonder.

"Excuse me, but from your dress and manner I judge you to be a Roman Catholic priest?"

"I am generally known as Father Jonois."

"Ah! have you any relation of that name? There was a priest of that name in Montreal last summer. I did not see him, but his name was frequently mentioned in my presence."

"It was myself."

"Indeed! Like many of your brethren, you are migratory. But the importance of this matter demands all our attention. How many men do you need, Father Jonois?"

"How many can you spare?"

"Every one, if General Montvere needs them."

The priest shook his head.

"It won't do; you are in danger of attack every moment you lie in this position."

"I know it; I came in near shore on purpose to induce the Indians to attack us. I should like to give my men a taste of Indian warfare. I have seen some of it myself."

"But, what do you mean by saying you could spare every man?"

"I can haul further out from shore, and prevent, by stratagem, any savages from attacking."

"There is no necessity. Give me four brave men, and keep four for yourself. I ask no more."

"You shall have them. Excuse me for a moment."

Captain Foxglove almost immediately returned, with four hardy-looking fellows, whom he introduced to Father Jonois as the respective members of the force for which he asked. At the same time the captain instructed them to seat and fortify themselves against all hunger for a day to come. While thus engaged the priest rose from the table, and the two walked out on deck.

"As soon as we leave," remarked the good father, "do you go farther away from shore, and anchor for the night, and keep up an unremitting watch. The sloop which was bringing General Montvere over Lake Erie was attacked a few nights ago."

"We have kept our eyes open while we lay here," replied the captain.

"Have you been molested?"

"Haven't seen the shadow of a red-skin since we cast anchor. We got a glimpse of them now and then as they were out in their canoes when we came down the lake."

"It is no evidence there are none in the vicinity. This quiet may be intended to deceive you. But I forgot; you tell me you have some knowledge of woodcraft?"

"Some; nothing to boast of, however. I was out on a scout several years since with one of the best scouts on the frontier."

"Who was he?"

"Basil Veghte. He went to Presq' Isle after we separated."

"He is the guide that is conducting General Montvere and his daughter to this point."

"Couldn't get a better man. If any one can do it, he's the man."

"You are right. I have known him by reputation for several years. General Montvere was very anxious to secure him."

"Whoever attempts violence toward the General's daughter will wake up a lion!" laughed Captain Foxglove. "The old fellow always goes armed, and he's as ready to use his pistols as any man I ever met. Is *Montvere* the name you know him by?"

Father Jenois smiled at the significant look of his friend.

"I knew him forty years ago, but he told me, when he took me on board, that he was to be General Montvere until he reached Montreal, when I suppose he will be—"

"I understand. I was instructed, when leaving Montreal, that I was to meet General Montvere at the western end of Lake Ontario, and of course, he is the man I am looking for."

"I trust you will speedily meet him."

"Shall I not furnish you with arms? I see you have none."

"Nor do I need any. I have not discharged a gun for years. This matter, if possible, is to be managed without bloodshed."

Captain Foxglove smiled at what he considered an absurd declaration, but he had too much respect for his friend to express his thoughts.

"You smile, I see, and do not believe what I say. But wait, and hear General Montvere's report to-morrow."

Ten minutes later, Father Jonois and the four men stood on the edge of the wood, while Captain Foxglove shook their hands and wished them good-speed on their journey. The next moment, they had entered the wood and were lost to sight.

The priest, as a matter of course, was leader of the party. Acquainted with the territory through which they were making their way, and knowing fully the object for which he had engaged these four men, he certainly was the proper one to act as their guide. Captain Foxglove had also warned them to obey him until they should come under the command of General Montvere, when their allegiance belonged to the General, by seniority of commission.

"My friends," remarked Father Jonois, when they had progressed some way in the wood, "it is necessary for our success and safety that I be implicitly obeyed in every thing. Let no temptation induce you to fire a gun. Disobedience may insure destruction."

They seemed honest in their promises, and with now and then an additional caution, the progress was continued. The priest supposed, with good reason, that Horace Johnson's treachery would manifest itself before General Montvere could make much further approach toward Ontario. He had no doubt the whole plot was already revealed, and the part he was to play was to be eminently that of rescuer.

About the middle of the afternoon, the priest, who was a few yards in advance, suddenly made a sign for the men behind to halt. "There is some one coming," he remarked, by way of explanation. "Be prepared to obey me."

The next moment, an Indian in his war-paint stepped forth to view. He drew back upon seeing the armed men, but, at a sign from Father Jonois, he seemed reassured, and advanced to meet him. The latter waved to the men to maintain their distance, while he immediately engaged in earnest conversation with the savage.

It was indeed fortunate that the priest encountered this aborigine, for he had seen the captives, and captors journeying toward Grand River, and a few words placed the whole matter in a true light before his white friends. Basil Verhite bound—the Frenchman leading the way—four Indians watch-

ing General Montvere and his daughter—their faces turned westward—was any thing more needed to tell the tale?

Father Jonois had known the savage for years, and had no difficulty in drawing this knowledge from him. He conversed in the Indian tongue, and, of course, the listening men understood not a word of what was said. He made the natural mistake, however, of supposing the Frenchman to be H. race Johnson. The Indian having communicated all he had to say, he departed, taking good care to give the white men a wide berth, who, in turn, were disposed to do the same favor for him.

"He has seen General Montvere," remarked the priest, by way of explanation, as they resumed their journey. "It is as I feared. He is a prisoner in the hands of the Indians."

"How many of them are there?"

"Only four—a match for two men."

Not once did the party halt, until shortly after dark they struck the Grand River. Here Father Jonois gave them a short rest, while he thoroughly reconnoitered his position, and endeavored to give some clue to the whereabouts of his friends. He could not be certain of their location, but, from what he had gained from his Indian friend, he judged them to be further up the river. His conjecture proved to be correct, for the party had gone but a short distance, when the glimmer of their camp-fire was seen. A few moments later, the keen ear of the priest caught the sound of a paddle. He listened and found it to be passing close under the bank upon which he was standing. Cautiously stepping to the water's edge, he was surprised and pleased to see that it was the Mystic Canoe, and the Ottawa girl Mariano.

CHAPTER XII.

'Tis true he shrunk from men, even of his nation,
When they built up into his darling trees,—
He moved some hundred miles off for a station
Where there were fewer houses and more ease.—BYRON.

"FATHER JONNOIS called to Mariano, in a suppressed voice, and she instantly paused with an expression of delighted surprise upon her beautiful face. They conversed in her own tongue, and finally agreed to keep pace with her, arranging so that both should reach the camp-fire about the same time. As the evening was now well advanced, they delayed but a few moments.

The nature of the ground compelled the priest often to lose sight of the Ottawa, but when a few hundred yards away from the camp-fire she awaited his arrival. Here it was concluded by Father Jonnois to pass around to the opposite side of the camp and to approach from that direction, at the same moment that Mariano came up.

A brief reconnoissance revealed the *status* of affairs. All were asleep save Basil Veghte, who lay in such a position that the reflection of the light upon his eyes could be seen. Father Jonnois again cautioned his men not to fire until he gave the order. Then, invoking Divine assistance, he advanced straight to Basil Veghte and cut his bands in a moment. The scout sprung to his feet at the same moment that General Montvere and each of his captors did. "Hold!" commanded Father Jonnois, throwing up his arms at the unmistakable signs of hostility between the two parties. "Not a shot must be fired. Surrender," he summoned addressing the white man, whom he well knew "and not a hair of your head shall be harmed!"

"I surrender," replied the Frenchman, glad indeed to yield on terms which he knew the good man could never break. The Indians, however, did not exactly comprehend this civilized manner of doing things, and instantly bolted, as several shots were fired after them by the soldiers. The priest looked around,

"Where is Johnson?"

"I shot him dead several hours ago," replied General Montvere. "We have to thank him for all this trouble, and to thank you for this safe deliverance from it."

"Not me but Him," replied the priest, pointing upward. "I supposed something like this was contemplated, and went to Captain Foxglove, who lies waiting in Ontario for you. He sent these men to your assistance."

"Most timely assistance too, it has proved."

Basil Veghte drew his knife.

"All I ax is the privilege of going into this old Frenchman. He's played the mischief with me several times, and I think it's about time I made things square with us."

"No, sir," replied Father Jonois, emphatically, "he surrendered under the guarantee of good treatment, and must receive it."

"What do you propose to do with him?" inquired General Montvere.

"Let him go, I suppose."

"Nothing of the kind. He must accompany us to Montreal, where this conduct of his shall be investigated and full justice meted out to him."

There could be no reasonable objection to this, and so it was agreed.

Miss Montvere advanced and took the hand of her friend.

"How shall I ever thank you for this?"

"By saying nothing at all about it."

"As good a way as any," she smiled, "for I can not find the words."

"Excuse me a moment."

All this time, Mariano had been standing so far in the shadow that none but the priest and guide were aware of her presence. The former signed to the latter, and speaking to the Ottawa, the three retreated some distance in the woods, where they were free from observation.

"My dear friends," said the reverend man, his voice tremulous with emotion, "this is a happy moment for me. There is no need of further concealment upon the part of either, now that Johnson, the great obstacle between you, has been removed. Mariano knows that Basil loves her, and has loved her for years. He is willing that his future life shall be

guided by her wish. And, Basil, the love you hold toward her is no greater than hers toward you. She has followed you into the path of danger, led only by her desire to prevent harm befalling you. She saw you go on board the sloop, and suspecting that evil was intended, she followed in her canoe with the purpose of helping, if there was any means by which it could be done. Providence has led her steps to this point, where you now meet."

"Women—is—queer—things;" stammered the great-hearted guide, as he took the warm, trembling hand of the Ottawa.

"You will not always think so," smiled the good priest. Basil, dropped her hand again and then stood irresolute.

"I must take my departure in the morning, perhaps not to see you again for a long time. Before going I shall be happy to unite you in marriage."

"That's the talk," exclaimed the scout, with a desperate jocularity. "What do you say, Mariano?"

Her answer was something uttered in so low a tone that it reached only the ears for which it was intended.

"We will now return. Between this and morning, you may talk the matter over."

The little party assembled around the camp-fire, and joined in a pleasant reunion. As there was scarcely any danger of further disturbance, they concluded to remain where they were until morning. A vigilant watch, however, was maintained. Basil Verhte sat apart conversing with Mariano, feeling himself the happiest man that ever walked the face of the earth. They had arrived at an understanding—exactly how and in what words concerns us not.

In the morning, the party gathered around the brave-hearted scout and timid, beautiful Ottawa; and there, on the banks of the Grand River, in Canada, Father Jonois made them one. Miss Montvere arranged the preliminaries, acting as bridesmaid, while one of the soldiers stood as groomsman. At the conclusion of the ceremony, Miss Montvere presented the bride with a beautiful and valuable ring, which was received with unfeigned delight.

"Receive my best wishes, and this slight token of my esteem."

As General Montvere took the hand of the scout, he placed in it twenty golden guineas.

"But I have no right to these," said the latter. "I've got you into the greatest trouble of your life."

"You have done your duty—say no more," returned the officer, waving peremptorily his hand as he retreated to the side of his daughter.

All partook of the best morning meal the Canadian woods could afford, and, after exchanging pleasant farewells, the party bound for Montreal set out upon their journey. At the urgent solicitation of General Montvere and his daughter, Father Jonois agreed to accompany them and spend a few weeks in that town.

Captain Foxglove, upon being hailed from the shore, began dancing around the deck, more furiously than when first visited by the priest. He cooled down, however, by the time the party was fairly on board, and received them in a becoming manner. The anchor was immediately weighed, and the bow of the "Dragon" turned toward the St. Lawrence.

The trip to Montreal was made in safety—but one incident worthy of narration occurring on the way. When within a few miles of the town, on a dark night, their prisoner, the gigantic Frenchman sprung overboard, and despite the utmost efforts of the crew, effected his escape to land. It need scarcely be said that he remained away from Montreal while there was the least possibility of meeting General Montvere.

Basil Veghte and his new-made wife, embarked in the canoe and descended the Grand River till they debouched into Erie, when they struck boldly across its now still depth to the southern shore. Here, not many miles from the ruins of Presq' Isle, where several other settlers had made their homes, the woodman fell to work and erected a cabin. On their journey, our hero learned the mystery of the past life of the beautiful Ottawa. Her actions since the Fall of Presq' Isle had been guided solely by the desire to escape from Horace Johnson and to befriend him whom she loved. Her affection for the brave-hearted guide had been growing ever since their separation, years before, on the banks of the lake, and she had followed him with the noblest of all motives—that of warding off any evil that impended over him.

Her visits to the islands, which had been such a source of wonder to Veghte, were thus explained. Some months be-

fore, an Ottawa and his wife, who had rendered themselves peculiarly obnoxious, were both set upon and so wounded that they were left for dead. Mariano managed to get them into her canoe, the following night, and to take them to the islands, where she was enabled to nurse them without danger of discovery. They had just recovered enough to leave for some place where they were safe from their enemies.

And Basil Veghte and Mariano : United at last !

How can I conclude better than with the words which I have already given :

"Home ! with its charms and sacred joys—a place where to lay his head ; a gentle form, with the love-light beaming in her eyes, waiting to welcome his return ; the sweet word, 'Father,' uttered by infantile lips ; the days of wandering ended, and rest—peace—repose."

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